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## SERMON SKETCHES FOR MARCH AND APRIL

By J. O. Reller

March 6

Zechariah 4: 6b

### Topic: The Supremacy of the Spiritual

*Introduction:*

Pertinent question: Where is center of battle in matters of religion? Answer: Between material and spiritual interpretation of life. Some say: Material is only reality, what can be tested by physical sciences. Others: Ultimate test of reality is spiritual experience.

Great issue since Christianity in world—even before. Struggle of Hebrew prophets for a spiritual religion against dead ceremonialism. Jesus focused attention on issue: spirit versus letter of the law also "Be not anxious . . . life is more than meat".

Same controversy in past and present century between science and religious facts of the universe pitted against soul of man.

This responsible to great extent for false division of everything into sacred and secular, happily outgrown. Battle not between these two but between material and spiritual.

The Supremacy of the Spiritual

I. The emphasis on the material to the disparagement of the spiritual. Introduce the text and explain as to context.

A. Reformation. In narrower sense revolt against Christianity, arrogant officials, corruption and intolerance in high places. In wider sense: struggle of human spirit to free itself from compulsion. Luther a symbol of this protest.

B. Mohammedanism and recourse to sword. Seemed to work but "force alone is temporary." In contact with pure Christianity it cannot stand.

C. Dealing with communism in America. Brutality of police which calls for protest from general public. Contrast this with freedom of teaching in schools of London which are supported by the government, and where instructors have freedom of utterance. Can't get ideas, however fantastic, out of men's heads with clubs.

II. The Emphasis on the Spiritual to the disparagement of the Material.

A. Buddhism and teaching of Nirvana—complete neglect of physical forgetting we have a body with legitimate needs to be satisfied.

B. Monasticism—Leaving society and betterment of man here and now, to go off and cultivate the life of the spirit. World left to go to ruin.

C. Any form of otherworldliness—heaven everything and this life nothing. The folly of this phase of Christian science which teaches that "doctors are the enemies of the human race".

Both I and II are wrong.

III. The Spiritual plus the Material but the Supremacy of the Spiritual.

A. Human being a body and spirit—neglect of either is fatal.

B. Labor Movement in England became successful when it became a party-machinery necessary to express ideal.

C. Christianity a movement of the spirit, but organization, the church, became necessary at outset.

D. Church life today. Complaint of too much organization. Truer to say that the spiritual side has been neglected.

We need the right balance between ideals and technique. Where no visions the people perish. Where no technique we lose ourselves in fruitless dreaming. That's the meaning of our text. Material alone insufficient. Not by might or power. Does not mean spirit will do work while people are idle. God's spirit in man—Observe this principle in all our work.

March 13

## The Way Out of the Dark

Deuteronomy 29 2a (Moffatt's Version)

(A sermon for these times of depression)

*Introduction:*

An arresting word—Unusual in sight—Seasoned conclusion, not a snap judgment.

Context: Deuteronomy means repetition of law. That's what

Moses was doing after 40 years of wanderings. Soon to surrender leadership. Giving final charge to people. Chapter is a part.

Visualize setting. Thousands of young disciplined Hebrews assembled—aged patriarch, leader of their fathers and mothers speaking. What was his message? It was as clear as crystal. I. Reality of God in their lives. See first half of chapter. 2. Their accountability to him. See second half of chapter (doom of disobedience). A depressing picture (uprooted and flung aside). So Moses adds text.

We are also at a crisis in our nation's life. Have been in wilderness past few years. Facing hidden issues. Wavering about outcome. Prospects not very reassuring. In uncertain state of mind remember text. and its lesson: *Trust in God and Do the Right.*

I. Hidden Issues with the Eternal—Trust God.

There are issues outcome of which cannot foresee. Must trust God for their consummation.

A. The Rebellion of the Colonists. Thinking of this as celebrate anniversary of George Washington. He and colleagues daring men in signing Declaration of Independence. Outcome uncertain. Had to trust God.

B. The Reformation. Another brave step for Luther, etc. Others: Huss, Savanarola tried. We know at what a cost. Not fanciful poetry. "Let goods and kindred go . . . . The body they may kill." Luther saved through friendship and power of princes. But outcome uncertain. Peasants' War and other excesses. Trusted God.

C. Organic union of Churches. Not hazardous step like A and B but outcome uncertain. Some concerned about some provisions in "Basis of Union". But must give and take. Cannot see what final outcome will be as in marriage of two persons must trust God.

D. Burning issues today.

1. International Realm—Disarmament Conference. How much is involved.

2. Domestic issue: Unemployment—A hidden issue. Does not imply that we can do nothing about it. Therefore Do the Right. True outcome hidden yet there are

II. Unfolded issues of the day—with us and our children to obey i.e., the outcome of which we can determine with reasonable certainty. Something we can and must do.

A. Go forward—taking next step that seems to be right. Forward, not backward—not destroy but control the machine that is responsible for much. Next step: face facts whatever they are

and whatever demands they make upon us to revise our personal living of social order.

B. Do the best we know i.e., what results in greatest good for all. Driven by logic of times to see how we are bound together. Becoming socially minded. Support all undertakings for relief of human want. Make necessary adjustments in our lives that time demands.

C. Believe in the right i.e., invincibility of truth and goodness. Many wondering whether they were fools not to have gotten theirs when getting was good and whether it really pays to hew so close to line of integrity today. Instead of questioning we ought to see that that is the only possible way to come out of the dark. Hold to old principles.

Lesson of history: Close your eyes to human need and the darkness will overwhelm. Illustration of queen during French Revolution told her subjects hungry and crying for bread and she answered: Why don't they eat cake? Cut off her head.

"Let us dare to act like Christians and see what happens."

March 20 — Palm Sunday

## The Value of Confirmation

Ecclesiastes 5: 4

*Introduction:*

Seems superfluous to talk of this in an Evangelical church, for the practice is one of the most valuable features of our church life. Pastors feel it is the last thing they would want to surrender. Parents want their children confirmed because they feel confirmation has meant much in their own lives.

By Confirmation mean not only the act or rite. That is only the climax—not much meaning apart from what precedes. Without conscientious preparation by pastor and faithful study by scholar the rite is as meaningless as a diploma is valueless without days of faithful study. Confirmation embraces everything from opening session last fall or 2 years ago up to present time.

I. Value of Confirmation for our Country.

Not presumption nor delusion to say this.

All is not well in America or in our locality. Do not imply that good old days were better. Believe that except for reactionary tendencies and slips the world is getting better. Standards being raised higher. Yet conditions rightly give one concern.

A. Business—profit motive dominant—dog eat dog policy.

B. Politics and government—graft—lobbies—the accepted thing many regard as part and parcel of system.

C. Breaking up of home life appalling—divorce—lack of any definite moral and religious training.

Only way to rid ourselves of these—by training up a generation of boys and girls above dangers of corruption and who, when they become leaders tomorrow will govern or be governed by a different set of motives. In this respect church is making a very real contribution to better public life.

II. Value for Church.

Ordinance a child of the church. Its value recognized in Germany for example, socialistic party mimicked the church and inaugurated something similar in propagating its doctrines, even to the use of such a rite as today.

Yet rite is native to the church, not primarily for sake of church but for people, to bring into conscious relation with God.

Value to church inestimable—provides intelligent membership. This essential in Protestantism, a church "Of, by and for the people."

III. Value for Parents and Sponsors.

Reminds of sacred vows taken at baptism of children. Examine ourselves how well we have paid our vows.

As regards the future—Love our children—Want them to succeed in life, do what is right, etc. We really want them to keep the vows today. But we are not consistent in our example, many of us. For some parents Confirmation is a good old form and without the backing of the elders its effect is neutralized 50 percent.

Not too late to change our habits. Do not let this plea for a square deal pass you by like wind whistling through a key hole. Decide today to undergird the impressions of today by a good example.

IV. Value for the Pastor.

Personal touch and influence of the pastor on young life. Thorough acquaintance and life-long friendships. Sees evidence of definite results of work. Give some concrete testimony from your past work with children.

V. Value for Confirmands themselves.

Do not have to guess or surmise but every pastor has the voluntary testimony from boys and girls of the value of Confirmation.

The result of a written statement on the part of the children on the Topic: "Why I want to be confirmed?"—Some answers: "I want to join the church," "I want to help in the work," I want to come to Holy Communion," "I want to consecrate my life to God," "I want to follow the Lord Jesus."

Could they say or do anything finer. Who would not help fulfill vows.

Remember what Jesus said of those who hinder—Millstone.

Remember what the Bible says of those who help. Dan. 12: 3.

Children, remember your confirmation text.

March 27 — Easter

*"If a man die, shall he live again?"* Job 14: 14.
*"Because I live, ye shall live also."* John 14: 19b.

**Topic: "The Question of the Ages"**

Begin with story of stream in Ozarks which disappears in the sand (the place called Sink in) and reappears later. Belief in Immortality like that. Like stream which has its rise in copious springs, belief in Immortality comes out of depth innermost nature of man. Today flows clean and certain, tomorrow uncertain and fitful. Evident interest today from many books. Death of millions during war at bottom of interest.

Easter good time to answer question again, "again" for every age must answer to its own satisfaction and in view of the current attitudes to life.

I. Improbability of proving or disproving Immortality.

By this is meant proving as we can demonstrate a proposition in physics—Society for Psychical Research attempting just this. Some high in scientific world (Sir Oliver Lodge) satisfied with evidence.

Belief in Immortality not something for proof and demonstration but faith and experience. Examples: Belief your mother is dearest person in the world—can't prove; Belief that a sunset is a lovely sight—can't prove; Belief that an orchestra is superior to a jazz band—can't prove.

If belief in immortality is emotional sentimentality, so is the belief that your wife and children are more than animal. Neither can it be disproven in sense as suggested above.

II. Difficulty of believing in immortality.

A. Appearances seem to be against.

1. Disintegration of the body with the brain SEEM to imply the destruction of intelligence and reason. Things are not always as they seem. Earth seems flat, etc.

B. Trying to understand something beyond our present existence or experience.

Illustration: of an unborn child trying to grasp the facts of this life. Difficulty, yes, impossibility of it.

III. Reasonableness of Belief. More reasonable to believe than deny.

A. Equipment of unborn child of hands, feet, eyes, etc., lead us to conclude they are for a purpose. Otherwise a shameful waste of time and energy.

Man's spiritual faculties which he cannot begin to exhaust in 50-80 or 100 years require other opportunities for development. Otherwise nature is a huge jokester.

B. Personality—the finest nature has produced, as far as we know—must persist if there is purpose in the universe.

Can we admit the transformation and conservation of energy in a piece of coal burned, and grant the destruction of the spirit of Jesus Christ. That were not reasonable.

He *could* not be holden by death. What happened on Easter to Him was not a miracle but a moral inevitability. He said: "because I live ye shall live also."

C. Because all the great minds have believed in it. "Homer for the Greeks, Virgil for the Romans, Dante for the Italians, Goethe for the Germans, Milton for the English, Emerson for Americans. From Socrates and Plato through the long line of philosophers to Bergson, Eucken and Whitehead."

IV. Certainty of Immortality.

A. The Character of Christ.

1. One altogether lovely. Cannot imagine anyone more beautiful or noble.

If Jesus Christ is *Man,* And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to him
And to him I will cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is *God,* and the only God, I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell
The earth, the sea, and the air.

2. Not only beautiful but dependable. Absolutely trustworthy. Wherever we try out his words, whether in church, business, politics, home, etc., we find he speaks the truth. For 2,000 years men have put his claims to the test and never has he failed them. Why not here when he says "Because I live—etc."

B. We witness transformation of life from death here in realm of character. See illustration of Pandita Ramabai in Christ of Every Road, p. 214.

"If a man die"—Question of the ages: matched by "Because I live"—the Rock of the Ages.

April 3 — Sunday after Easter

## The Wrestle of Doubt With Faith

John 20: 28.

*Introduction:*

Case of Thomas not exceptional—most all believers had similar experiences. Doubting so general with young people for example that rather normal than abnormal. Doubt no sign of perversity neither a particular virtue. Can grow into the Christian life without necessarily going through profound season of doubt. But doubting is a fact of the Christian life and therefore we must face it.

I. The Doubt of Thomas.

A. Intellectual—could not believe because could not understand. Had witnessed crucifixion. Had assisted perhaps at burial. Beyond comprehension. Wasn't logical.

Thomas not a rationalist any more than other disciples. The news was just too much in view of past happenings.

B. Temperamental—His "except I shall see" not the calm assertion of a cold scientist but the impassioned, desperate exclamation of one whose hope was gone.

That explains "He was not present when Jesus came"—not kept away, but stayed away. Pessimistic outlook. Disposed to melancholy and solititude adapted for that. Illustrate his temperament from John 11, 16.

C. Honest—not unwilling to believe. Nothing he would sooner have believed. It meant everything therefore he was so exacting.

So no sign of a perverse nature. Without making a virtue of it, it is sometimes sign of growth. Some never doubt. Too lazy intellectually.

Progress sometimes through doubt—Columbus.

Doubt should be constructive. Better to believe the old outworn than take away and put nothing in its place.

II. The Faith of Thomas.

A. First step "He was with them" bears out above that Thomas was not prejudiced. Willing to anything within reason apply to life. We must get in line with operations of God.

Example of Caterpillar. If it has faith nature will make it a butterfly, but it must do its part, spin its cocoon.

So man—agnostic, doesn't know, he doesn't deny, but he is not sure. To come to faith there is something he must do. Get in line. Let him act and do as he believes. God would have him

act if he really is. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know."

B. Second step "Christ came". Fulfills conditions to the letter. What was Thomas' reaction? Proceed to critically examine Jesus? Nothing of the sort. Fall on knees in adoration. Did not carry out his requirement for

1. Did not mean it literally.
2. Was no longer necessary.

More than one way to establish truth. One way that science—measurement and analysis. Another—spiritual discernment—we never stop to analyze mother-love. Those lifted out of gutter can't give scientific demonstration, but God is a reality to them.

C. Blessed are they, etc., verse 29. Objective sight not necessary to belief in Christ. Seeing is not always believing—Pharisees and enemies of Christ. Example: Magician performing wonders but seeing is not believing. On contrary believing leads to seeing. Example: Accept testimony of those who tried and assure us from experience that—Money doesn't bring happiness. Who saves his life shall lose it. And act upon it. Believing leads to seeing.

April 10

## The Problem of the Lost Sheep

Luke 15: 1-7.

*Introduction:*

Christian religion revolutionary—persists in disturbing status quo; what this is not as it ought to be. Christ was revolutionary. Regarded as dangerous radical. Refused to conform.

Text an illustration; his association with "irreligious people". Attitude of religious leaders towards these untouchables.

Jesus not only interested in the problem of the lost sheep, he did something to solve it. We assume the same of a Christian congregation. To think less were an insult to Christ's followers.

The problem stated: Vast number of unchurched; presence in church of vast numbers of passive members, who find more satisfaction in golf, motoring, newspaper, etc., than pursuit of spiritual values.

Problem always changing, assuming new proportions. Must face it. Assume you are willing to do something about it. Four things necessary.

I. Loving Concern.

Jesus tried to make his action comprehensible by appealing to their care for sheep. Explain interest of Eastern shepherd for sheep. Often gave his life. Why? Relative value not great—one

out of 100. Rather sorrowful condition, compassion. "When Jesus saw the multitude"—When Pharisees saw them they turned up their noses. Their respective attitudes toward the woman taken in adultery.

Viewpoint makes great difference. Multitudes living without God—neighbors, friends, yes relatives in our own home. Are we concerned? Do we even lose any sleep thinking of it? Problem will not be solved until loving concern.

II. Patient Seeking.

Leave 90 and 9—Wilderness does not imply neglected and open to dangers but uncultivated, uninhabited land. Shepherd as necessary for 99 as the lost one. Describe landscape like Judea, steep roadways, wild beasts, etc. Emphasis is not on the case of the flock but the lost one.

How do we measure up to the requirement? The Sunday school teacher's attitude to irregular and uninterested; or the average active church member toward backslider; or the attitude of the pastor toward indifferent. We know temptation to forget about them. No justification to neglect save wilful and obstinate sinner.

Sleep not such. Just wandered away where grass sweet. This case with the majority, living animal lives. No check on their inclinations, etc.

III. Willing Sacrifice.

"Layeth on his shoulder." Why carry the sheep? Because exhausted, bruised, cut, etc. So was shepherd too. Watching and leading all day, searching through the night. But he does it "rejoicing". Does not grumble and scold, there is a song on his lips. This "rejoicing" heart of the parable. That was Jesus' joy, satisfaction his meat and drink (Jesus and Samaritan woman—Master eat)

It takes time, thought, energy, prayer to bring back the lost. Service must be willing not bitter, sour and grudging. Illustration: Dr. Jowett's story of old man in parish, who came into his study radiant and exclaiming: "The 69th time did it". He had tried that often to win a friend before succeeding.

IV. Triumphant Rejoicing.

This is fruit of the other three. This is a big demand, you say? How little we know of joy.

Testimony of Salvation Army worker, spending most of time redeeming "down and outs". When won turn them over to established churches. Some say not a pleasant occupation to win and then give up to others. How mistaken we are. Greater joy in one

found than 99 never lost. Simply means profound satisfaction, abundant compensation for all labors.

Every church faces problem of lost sheep. What are we doing about it—mention actual figures from church, society and Sunday school records.

April 17

## Three Facts of the Kingdom Enterprize

Ezekiel 37: 1-10

*Introduction:*

Characteristic oriental method of teaching: through picture and symbolism. Bible full of "orientalisms". Much of our religious terminology so colored.

Ezekiel apt at this. Book abounds in allegory, etc. Our text a fantastic and gruesome example.—"Valley of Dry Bones".

Such passages get new interest in view of Zionism. We do not regard this movement as do some adventistic groups as fulfillment of prophecy.

Context: Ezekiel prophesied among Babylonian captives. Who said verse 11b: "Our bones are dried up". Encouragement to look forward to time of restoration. Serves another purpose. Modern application

Three factors of Kingdom enterprise stressed.

I. The Field.

World wide enterprise—humanity—This like dry bones. Men dead in trespass and sin. World without God is helpless. Unregenerate human nature is our field. This is not painting the picture too black. Facing the facts.

So Ezekiel started out. Melancholy scene; discouraging surroundings. Very dry. When asked "Can these live?" did not even trust his opinion.

Jesus faced the facts—"Sheep in midst of wolves"—"If they called Master Beelzebub".

Do not underestimate tragedy that has befallen the race, nor reduce Christianity to level of ethical culture. Sin is a fact not a fancy, a power not a poem. Human nature left to itself always goes down, not up. Christianity has a job on its hands to change human nature. Begin by recognizing and admitting that.

Bones are very many and very dry.

II. Faith.

Second feature of vision is prophet. He commanded to prophesy—He is instrument through which regeneration comes, agency through which God worked.

Ezekiel prepared for this—see vision in first chapter of wings and human hands under them—symbol of divine and human in co-operation but human controlled by divine the wings moved the hands.

Only one way of God bringing life to dry bones—through human instrumentality—the church. Handmaiden to serve him: Business is to prophesy to dry bones.

Illustration or Story of Christ talking to angel Gabriel "I am counting on them".

Prime requirement in human instruments—Faith. Mark his words: "Dry bones, listen!" He believed they could and would. Faith in their slumbering possibilities.

Apply this to certain group or individuals who seem spiritually dead. No one lost unless we believe he is.

III. Force—The divine factor.

There was no breath in them. Vital thing missing. Calls to wind, God's breath. Divine completing and crowning the work of human agency.

Church may have everything—order, reverence, ritual, money, —but the essential thing, breath from God.

Same in individual—standing, culture, influence, good in themselves, but no substitute for life of God in soul of man. Not God without us—not we without God—but God with us.

All things are possible to him that believeth.

April 24

## The Heart of the Eternal

Hosea 11: 8a—Context 11: 1-11 and 14 (Moffatt)

Widespread interest in religion. This sometimes reactionary (Russia) interested in stamping it out. Gandhi soul of his revolt is sustained by religious devotion.

Indications of interest in magazines and theatres—(Green Pastures).

This interest is not the same as devotion to the church. Deeper. Purpose and goal of life, whether impersonal law as self-conscious personality is back of universe.

Question raised by science. Childhood faith conceived of heaven as "three rifleshots above the earth." Cannot reconcile with the revelations of a modern telescope. Face necessity of constructing harmonious philosophy of life.

Another source of deeper probings, dark tragedy in life. Eve and Abel why?—Christ on Cross "My God—Why?" Strange to say we find an illuminating text in Old Testament. (Be sure to

study context.) In God's longing over his disloyal people we base a correct picture of the essential nature of God, what he is like.

I. Patience—long-suffering (Read Chapter 11: 1-4a.)

Characteristic of a true parent—the real teacher—The patience required in training of animals (some wonderful pictures of trained dogs and monkeys in the movies). Shall patience be essential in training of humans and God be less. No he is infinitely more than we.

God patient with Israel because she like an immature child. They lacking in experience "will not break bruised reed."

God patient because he sees possibilities as sculptor sees an angel in a block of marble. Difference between Jesus and other religious leaders of his day, between Christian missionary and heathen priest, possibilities in most ignorant.

An encouragement to all who want to do better and yet betrayed into sin. Infinitely patient just as long as we try.

II. God not only patient but a *suffering* God.

Nothing we more instinctively shrink from and I include mental as well as physical pain.

Jews of Jesus' day, who believed in moral government of the world—good rewarded, evil punished—could not conceive of a suffering Messiah. Preaching of Christ crucified a stumbling-block.

We see it is the glory of our Christ.

Parents not only willing to suffer if need be, but inevitably must suffer. Part of true parenthood. Illustrate this—God can't be less but more than we are at our best.

See Isaiah 43: 2—Meaning God not only *with* the person suffering for the sake of right but also a sharer in his pain. So regard Isaiah 53. Though it received its highest fulfilment in Christ, yet true of anyone—any faithful servant of God—who by willing acceptance of suffering makes known the redeeming love of God.

III. God of love—Follows from foregoing. It's love that makes him patient and willing to suffer.

Story of a lad in a good home, truant in school repeatedly. Father said he would punish if it happened again by making him sleep in attic and having supper curtailed. When it did happen threat carried out but father no rest that evening, so went to attic and slipped under cover with his wayward son and spent the night there—That is a picture of God. He would not do less. He has done more in Paul, St. Francis, Livingstone, etc.

Note, we need in religion such creative love, not sentimentality. Fear has all but passed out. This love does not erase all moral distinctions but loves to something better the wayward sinner.

A wonderful Gospel and men will accept when we, the church, learn to speak with God—O Ephraim how can I give you up. O Israel how can I let you go!

# RELIGION IN AN ERA OF READJUSTMENT

Professor Elmer E. Arndt

(Conclusion)

What message has the church for today? What program has it that will capture the imagination of men and compel their energies? How will it lead men to those fundamental assurances without which life loses nobility and dignity and meaning? How, finally, will it bring to men the Word of God, the Word of Salvation?

We may find a suggestion for an answer to these inescapable questions in the nature of Christianity itself. The characteristic of both vital Hebrew religion and Christianity is that they are bipolar. On the one hand is God and on the other man. And the task of religion as the prophets and Jesus conceived it was to bring men to God and ethically relate men to their fellows. For when religion neglects the task of ethically relating man to man it courts alliance with the *status quo* and thus becomes the magic support of the lust for power and greed in high places and the opiate of the unfortunate. And to neglect the task of bringing man to communion with God is to cut off the source of power for ethical creativity and substitute for the ineffable a sterile and static ideal.

If the church is to be a dynamic influence in contemporary society it can neglect neither function. For each supports and enriches the other. It is no accident that the spiritual leaders of the nation which gave the Western world its religion condemned social injustice and unrighteousness in the name of its God and found the service of God to be to walk humbly with God, to love mercy, and to do justice.

This is too often forgotten when we attempt to deal with the irreligion of the modern generation. The acids of modernity apparently corrode the basic beliefs of religion and we seek to counteract their influence by dialectic. But another course is open to us, a course suggested by the Christian tradition itself: *"If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God."** It is by doing justice that we shall discover that the universe is not morally indifferent; it is by exercising a selfless love that we shall find love at the heart of the universe. The way to assurance of the fundamental tenets of religion lies in the establishment and creation of ethical relationships between man and his fellows and between groups of men.

Much of our current thinking concerning social relationships and religious problems is vitiated by the fallacy of conceiving man

* John 7: 17.

as an abstract individual on whom social relationships are imposed. There is, however, no such individual as one without social relationships, for relations to other personalities is the very essence of personality itself. "Individual" and "Society" are complementary terms. Without society the individual has but few of the characteristics we associate with personality (if such a being is at all conceivable), and without individuals there can be no society. Individualism on one hand overlooks the social nature of man and collectivism on the other overlooks his claims to be a unique personality.

Out of such confusion has sprung the false antithesis between the social and the personal gospel. The problems which harass our modern world and the despair which has settled like a blight over man demand not either one or the other but both, for these problems and this despair are deeper than the false psychology of such division. The individual who stands before God stands alone; but he stands as a personality who has laid claims and upon whom claim have been laid by his fellowmen. The modern church has emphasized the intrinsic worth of the individual as being the center of the ethic of Jesus. But we must not forget that co-equal with the principle of the value of the individual in the ethic of Jesus stands the principle of the solidarity of the human race. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

If the church is to exercise its function it must concern itself with social relationships and seek to establish them on an ethical basis. It cannot live and abjure the prophetic task which is laid upon it. For the value of the individual is a meaningless phrase in a society which gives privilege to a few and denies to the many the right to develop and live the good life; and the promise of salvation in another world has an evil sound to the oppressed when it is given by an institution which sanctifies power and force in an unethical and unjust social order. The recent history of the German church speaks loudly to all who would hear.

There are, then, three principles which the church must weave into our social order if it is to fulfill its mission. First, there is the principle of justice whose ethical basis is the recognition of the rights of the individual and the rights of other individuals and society as a whole over against the rights of the individual. It involves a limitation on the part of the individual and on the part of society. The ideal of justice is to establish a community of wills, not to subject the wills of the many to the unrestrained lusts and ambitions of a small privileged class. In our age the problems of society are, however, not so much problems of the relation of the individual to the group but rather the problems involved in the

relation of groups to groups. We face problems, for example, between white race and negroes, between labor and capital, between the urban and the rural population.

In a day in which the courts use their judicial and police powers to crush the struggle of the laboring class to attain a more equal share of the wealth it has helped to produce; in an era in which white men express their pride and egoism by heaping insult upon insult on black and yellow men and give vent to their resentment against the injustices of the established order by savage hate and murder of black men; when innocent men are jailed because they dared to attack a social order based on unjust privilege and ruthless force, the church must raise its voice and cry for justice. Such things cannot be permitted to go unnoticed or without emphatic rebuke. The unjust man may live and prosper; but no nation can nurture the cancer of injustice in its body politic and life.

But a social order is not merely a tangle of claims and counter-claims. It has its definite claims also. And thus if the church is to make the cleansing power of her gospel felt she must cry for more than justice: she must proclaim and work for the establishment of a society based on mutual aid. An ethical society is an organism based on the mutual functioning of all the parts for the good of the whole and that of the whole for the good of the individual. It is not an anarchy in which those possessed of the privilege and the power which come from wealth enjoy the fruits of others' labor and live like parasites at the expense of those who perform the necessary functions to maintain social life. It is not a chaos, misnamed a system, which gives free rein to the acquisitive instinct of men and guarantees their gains with all the force of the state. Rather it is a society whose characteristic is function rather than acquisitiveness and whose end is the expanding of opportunities for all rather than the maintenance of an unnatural and unjust inequality.

The church must work out the implications of the second great commandment with courage and insight. Only thus can the mechanical, unethical collectivism of modern industrialism be transformed into an organic unity based on justice and love. Property means power, and property used for power over others denies the very principles of Christianity. The only ethical justification for power is its use for others. Economic goods cannot be held by those who perform no function and those who perform necessary functions cannot be deprived of the fruits of their labor in a Christian order. If a social order integrated by ethical relationships is to be established, those forces such as power and greed

which are in their very nature divisive must be restrained. And further the church cannot continue to sanction and propogate so-called economic virtues without exercising critical insight as to their implications. It is the mission of the church to proclaim mutuality in the face of a society which fattens on the exploitation of the labor, of the lusts, indeed, of the very lives of men.

Yet even this second principle is not enough. For the cross stands as the central fact in the Christian faith. It must also be a central fact in the Christian life. No ethical principle is higher than the principle of voluntary self-sacrifice. "Take up thy cross and follow me" is an injunction that we dare not disregard. Voluntary self-sacrifice is a necessary act if the church is to be true to her Master. It is well for us to count the cost and realize the meaning of what we would do so that we do not beat a hasty retreat at the first approach of the enemy. Still, it is the only way to life, to vigor, to the hearts of men. The struggle with established powers and privilege will doubtless cost the institutional church much of its wealth and much of its prestige in certain quarters. For the struggle against brute force, against enthroned privilege, against the spirit of money-making will bring it in conflict with the sources from which it has received both income and protection. Yet if the church is to fulfill her task she must be prepared to face her persecution continually without compromise and without complaint. The church cannot fulfill her mission and continue the unholy alliance between church and state, between religion and privilege.

It is in acts of voluntary self-sacrifice for the cause of justice and righteousness and love that the ethic of solidarity finds its highest expression. But it is just because sacrifice to be ethical must be voluntary that it rests ultimately on the decision of the individual. We dare not mask our own desire for comfort and security under heroic speeches for the self-sacrifice of the church. Ultimately, as protestant doctrine has taught, each individual is a priest before God. That is to say, the ethical and religious values repose, not in a system, but in the attitude and behavior of individuals. We cannot be less rigorous with ourselves than with others. To cloak our desire for prestige, for power, for comfort, under high-sounding ideals prostitutes those ideals to our own selfishness and discredits them before others. The moral and religious power of Protestantism depends not only on the height and comprehensiveness of her ideals but also on the degree with which those ideals are incorporated in daily life. In the last analysis, it is the decisions which individual ministers and congregations make when confronted with a choice between security and prestige on

one hand and an uncompromising stand for justice and righteousness on the other than guarantee or vitiate the vitality and efficacy of the doctrines of religion and their social implications.

It is not, therefore, enough to hold up the picture of the ideal and paint it in all its glory. That is both an ineffective and a safe procedure. What is necessary is a concrete application of these principles in specific situations. It is not enough to speak of a functional society based on mutuality. It is necessary to espouse the cause of the underprivileged in a just strike, to expose the lust and greed involved in gambling in stocks, to denounce and if possible prevent the murder of men whose sole crime is that they are different in opinion or skin from ourselves. It is necessary for the church to repudiate the appeal to force whether it be to suppress a strike or protect investments in a foreign land. Injustices and inequalities, the use of force, the lust for power, and greed for wealth are concrete and specific and manifest themselves in particular situations. To indulge in generalities is doubly vicious; for it is not only impotent and ineffective, but it is also deceptive and finally hypocritical.

In such ethical activity directed towards the establishment of a classless society of unbroken brotherhood lies the way to a vital sense of the presence and the reality of God, God the holy One, the Father whose love is based on righteousness. Such certainty as we can attain comes not from refinement of cosmological theories. We do not know that God, in any religious sense, is or what he is after we have learned what the physical sciences have to teach us. For while pure mathematics and its applicability to the actual world are significant facts for any intelligent *Weltanschauung,* nevertheless the way to religious certainty does not lie through the domain of physics. For the knowledge which mathematics gives us, while certain, deals only with possibilities and ideal entities, and the knowledge which physics gives us, which is information of the spatio-temporal world, is only of probabilities. These remarks are not meant to disparage either mathematics or physics or the knowledge they give us; they are meant to indicate the intrinsic difficulties attending any attempt to discover God or his nature through physical science and the ineradicable element of uncertainty in their cosmological conclusions. It is, futhermore, sobering to reflect how many conclusions of physical science have been radically changed or abandoned since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The social sciences offer another perspective to view the problems of life. Social and psychological sciences are relatively new, it is true; but it is just because they have to deal with personalities

and their relations to one another, that is to say, with the development of individuals having moral wills and the adjustment of those wills to one another to form societies that they can furnish some of the material for theological reflection. But if social and psychological science in the interest of greater precision confine themselves to statistics and develop unconsciously a deterministic metaphysic—and there are many indications that this is happening in these two fields—then not only will these sciences lose much of their social significance but they will also afford little help to the theologian.

The most promising approach to religious certainty and to truthful and vital theological study is from the standpoint of a rigorous social ethics. This does not mean that the cosmological problem is either to be disparaged or neglected. Still less does it mean that religion is to be reduced to ethical activity. The realization of the tragedy of life, the consciousness of our egocentricity, the quest for salvation do not find their final answer in ethical activity or from the study of ethics, whether formal or material or both. These questions and their answers take us beyond ethics to theology, beyond the good life to the sphere of religion. What is contended is that the most fruitful approach and the highest center of reference for religious problems both theoretically and practically is through the field of ethics. For it is the ethical implications and fruits of religious doctrines that give us a criterion of their truth. This is no more than the method of the prophets and Jesus. Nor need one do more than call to mind how often Jesus used those relations between men which had ethical significance to illustrate the nature of God. Such an ethical approach and criterion saves religion from degenerating into magic and becoming the subservient ally of organized injustice.

The contemporary situation is not one to fill us with unbounded optimism. Still, there is no reason for us to adopt an enervating pessimism. Both attitudes are hostile to the creation of moral energy which must ever be one of the first tasks of the church. It was the fact that early Christianity gave a new impetus, a new direction to the lives of its converts that was in large measure responsible for its success. In a day in which wise men have lost their power to act and nations know what is desirable but are too bound by ancient fears and hatreds and prejudices to incorporate the new into their lives it is the task of the church to infuse new power into jaded and careworn lives. We have lost our energy because we have lost the consciousness of a great purpose dominating human life and human history. The lusts for greed and power have exacted their price by transforming moral

energy into desire for mere creature comforts. And if the masses today in despair turn from a spiritual to a materialistic view of life it is because the church has too long given her sanction to the spirit of money-making and blessed the inequalities and injustices of capitalistic society. For when men suffer fear and hunger and cold, not because of the demonic elements in nature, but because of the lusts of their fellowmen the promise of salvation in another world is meaningless when given by an institution that condones the causes of their suffering and shares in the profits of their exploitation in this world. It has long been a principle of the missionary enterprise that men's bodies must be healed if their souls are to be won. This principle in its far-reaching social implications has not yet been seriously considered by the church in its homeland.

But not only is moral energy necessary. Moral energy must be linked with ethical imagination. The formalism in ethics that has characterized the teaching of protestantism has produced characters which were admirable in limited relationships like the family but has utterly failed to make men aware of the far-reaching implications and results of their actions in a collectivistic society. Protestantism has fostered the virtues of chastity and loyalty and honesty, but it has at the same time inculcated an individualism which has destroyed the sense of solidarity with others. The task before the church in this respect is a double one: on the one hand it must practice rigorous analysis in disclosing to men the fruits of their actions and on the other hand it must imaginatively discover the implications of its ideal. To preach the love of neighbor and confine its application to those whom we naturally or already love or use it as a sanction of paternalism is ultimately to discredit the principle itself. To preach the cross and still sanction the use of force and might is to remove the cross from the sphere of history and make it a meaningless symbol. It is of central importance if we are to create ethical imagination to recognize that the ethic of Jesus is not a set of static laws but a series of dynamic principles whose implications are to be discovered and applied in increasing measure. Both conservatism and liberalism have erred in regarding the Sermon on the Mount as static and assuming that it is a finished code rather than the kernel of a new approach to God and to man with capacity for unlimited development.

If the church is to be a vital and potent agency in our modern life and play its role in the process of social change it must emphasize the solidarity of mankind. The recognition of the solidarity of humanity is the first step in ethicizing the impersonal and unethical collectivism which has characterized and continues to characterize the machine age. Here both the conservative and the liberal

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wings of protestantism have failed. The former by abstracting the individual from his social context and teaching a salvation in another world without correlating the salvation to come with life in the present., The liberal wing, while professing the social gospel, has on the whole naively put its trust in isolated actions of individuals. This has made for insulated individualism and facile optimism. Liberalism has shown itself consistently incapable of dealing with the relations between groups and recognizing the profundity of social and cultural problems as well as the religious problem itself. Liberalism has put a naive faith in isolated actions partly because in reaction to a morbid interest in the state of one's soul it has turned its attention to external actions and neglected the difficult art of introspection, and partly because it has sought to create a more ethical society by emphasizing the intrinsic value of personality. But the intrinsic value of personality can only become a meaningful principle when it is regarded as the correlate of that other cardinal principle of the ethic of Jesus, namely the solidarity of men.

The efficacy of the church and the vitality of its program will depend on how realistically it deals with the problem and situations before it. The conservative branch of Protestantism has been realistic enough in its sense for the tragic elements in life and its refusal to be cajoled into any easy optimism which identifies every new reform with the advance of the kingdom of God. It has not succumbed, as have the liberals, to the facile and obviously dubious doctrine of uniliniar evolution in the sphere of morals and social relationships. But at the same sime it has permitted its recognition of the difference between the relative and the absolute to obscure the real distinctions that occur in the relative and the historical. While the liberal wing has been interested in concrete betterment it has vitiated its program by naive romanticism and optimism. The notion of uniform progress, the social and economic situation with its continued expansion, the revolt against a static dogmatism have all contributed to its viewpoint. Its enthusiasm for individual reforms has obscured for it the depth of the problems with which the church must deal and led it to an easy faith in the fundamental goodness of men. Inevitably the liberals have become in many cases either tired radicals or allowed their message to degenerate into mere platitudes.

The church cannot deal effectively with contemporary life if it refuses to face the facts. The persistent refusal of both the liberal and the conservative wings to honestly face the facts of class struggle has not added to their insight. Likewise, the concentration of interest on pacifism is accompanied by an uncritical

attitude towards our own pacifism. Are we pacifistic only because we have gained all that is available and wish now to protect the gains of our imperialism and exploitation from appropiation by those whom we dispossessed? Can we be consistent in our pacifism and yet refuse to surrender that to which we have no right? Furthermore, in emphasizing the necessity for the abolition of the war system we cannot neglect that more subtle kind of warfare which is carried on by manipulation of economic control. It is none the less unethical because its weapons are boycott and withdrawal of credit rather than warships and armies.

Together with a rigorous analysis of social relationships in their ethical implications must go an equally rigorous analysis of the lusts that are embedded in the hearts of men and which often appear in disguised and rationalized form. There must be a deep understanding of the problems confronting the individual, problems which culminate in the religious problem. To assume that social problems such as the race question or that of class relations is merely a matter of external social maladjustment is to court defeat from the first. The psychological roots of these questions are much deeper than merely external relations. A more realistic understanding of human nature is just as necessary as a more comprehensive understanding of social forces.

The easy assumption of uniform progressive evolutionism and the romantic view of man have led to the neglect of one basic problem. There are few problems which press so urgently for attention and have received such scant notice as the ethics of social change. Conservatism has no interest in the problem and liberalism has contented itself with the assumption that the way to the rehabilitation of society lies through the effort of individuals. A deeper view discloses that the significant problems and conflicts are not between individuals but between groups, and if any advance towards the Beloved Community is to be made it must come through a reconstruction of group relationships. That coercion will be necessary in dealing with large groups is inevitable. Here the problem is what kind of coercion is to be employed. The criterion for coercion employed in the attainment of ethical ends is that which creates least hatred and ultimately least division between the group coerced and the coercing group. But ever must the ideal of the Christian Community be a society in which coercion ceases to be an instrument for attaining desired ends.

The present is an era of religious as well as economic and social readjustment. It is becoming more and more evident that liberalism is inadequate and superficial. Certain principles, indeed, for which liberalism has stood cannot be surrendered, such

as the interest in historical criticism and the social interest. We cannot fall back on mechanical authoritarianism or biblicism and crude supernaturalism. Nor does the dialectic theology with its agnostic metaphysics and divorce between the empirical and the transcendent worlds and the consequent disregard of the problems of history afford us a point of view adequate to our needs. The dialectic theology has performed a notable service by showing the incompatibility of Christianity and philosophical idealism, but it has drawn another conclusion than that we would draw from this antagonism. Much less can religion attain vitality and potency today through exclusive attention to and central interest in the peripheral problems of liturgy and cosmology. And yet our way is not uncharted; the direction is given us. It is for us to follow the path and explore it. There is, it is true, no theological system ready to be appreciated. That task is also before us. This is not a disadvantage; for our theology must come from life and be forged in the struggles that confront us. The theological task is not to be given up, yet it must not be carried on in isolation but rather in connection with our pressing problems.

It is no easy task that faces us if we are to vitalize and strengthen religious life. For the institutional church is bound up with our whole capitalistic structure. That is our tragic fate. And still it is necessary that the church free herself from this unholy alliance. That is the condition without which advance is impossible. It will not do to fall back on the traditional position of conservatism which interprets the separation of church and state as meaning that the church must not criticize the state. Nor will it do to continue in the essentially bourgeois assumptions of liberalism and, closing our eyes to the facts, continue to preach general principles without concrete activity. For that is to be caught unprepared in the maelstrom of conflicting interests and, being unprepared, naively identify the iniquitous means by which the state seeks to gain its ends with ideal purposes, as so tragically happened in the years of the World War.

It is through the voluntary identification of the church with the underprivileged in their struggle for justice that the church must deal with ethical emancipation. The church must deal with ethical problems in the economic sphere; it is a forced option. The fact that the church has by her very silence unconsciously sanctified the injustices of the *status quo* does not add to the ethical insight of its teaching. Too long has the church identified herself with the possessing class and too long cried "Peace, peace," when the workers sought to attain the inherent rights which belong to them as producers but which had been wrested from them by those

who perform no function. The church must maintain her freedom to criticize and open her doors to all who seeking would find; but she cannot remain indifferent or neutral when righteousness and justice are involved. Thus it is that by uniting with the workers in building a classless society of unbroken brotherhood, and integrated social order based on righteousness and mutuality, shall the church lead men to the certainty of God and the realization of the values of religion.

If the church then is to bring men to communion with God its path lies negatively through a separation from capitalism with its lust for wealth and its resultant inequalities, and positively through the incessant striving to build an equalitarian social order based on justice and righteousness, even on mutuality.

In conclusion we must always bear in mind that the end of all social change and of all ethical activity is communion with God. The social program is not an end in itself but must point beyond—to God. But it is the promise of the gospel that in such activity men attain to the certainty of God. And in attempting to break down the barriers which isolate men from their fellows, the individual will find a path open to a new life, a way out of his egocentricity, and learn to place his moral trust in Him who transcends history and yet works in history. And if in achieving these ends the institutional church loses its life, it may be that a more potent, a more spiritual church will come into being; such at least must be our high faith.

# Die Wiederentdeckung der Eschatologie.

Dr. Werner Petersmann.

## 1.

### Verfall und Verlust.

Die Eschatologie, die „Lehre von den letzten Dingen," die Lehre von Tod und Ewigkeit, jüngstem Gericht und Vollendung, Jenseits und Wiederkunft Christi war für die just vergangene „liberale" Periode der Theologiegeschichte wirklich in mancherlei Sinn das „letzte" Kapitel hinten am Ende der Dogmatik. Sie bedeutete für sie mehr nur einen Anhang und oft genug den „Hinweis auf eine große Verlegenheit." Selbst in der konservativeren Linie bedeutete sie mehr oder weniger bloß einen abrundenden Abschluß. Im „prophetischen Lehrstück" „über die jüngsten Dinge" fand, wie M. Rade es, allerdings wohl zu sehr pointiert, bezeichnet, „eine hilflose Gelehrsamkeit sich in einer ganz und gar nicht mehr urchristlich-eschatologisch gestimmten Zeit mit dem Bibelbuchstaben und dem Dogma ab." Der Mangel an eschatologischer Glaubensausschau und Glaubensgespanntheit in der protestantischen Theologie, die von der Reformation her anti-schwärmerisch gerichtet und stärkst individualistisch auf persönliche Gottesgemeinschaft und Gotteskindschaft in Welt und Zeit gesammelt war, förderte eine höchst uneschatologische Eingliederung der „Lehre von den letzten Dingen" in das dogmatische System: der Glaube „postuliert" in nachträglicher Schlußfolgerung die „Vollendung," ja vielleicht nur gar die „abschließende Vollendung," vielleicht auch lediglich die „Unzerstörbarkeit" (Wendt) des Heils, das er hier und jetzt schon erfährt und besitzt, indem also „die gegenwärtige Glaubensgemeinschaft mit Gott bereits als Verwirklichung des Heils verstanden wird." (G. Hoffmann.) Und immer weniger in Ton und Betonung wird die Eschatologie der „krönende Abschluß, das brausende Finale des Siegesliedes Gottes über die Welt." (K. Heim.) Sie wird mehr und mehr jener Außen-Seiter, jener „Versuch, nachdem über alles Mögliche geredet ist, nun auch noch etwas über Tod, Jenseits und Weltvollendung vorzubringen," wie Karl Barth ironisch bemerkt. In der sich vordrängenden kulturprotestantischen (modernistischen) Linie der Theologie wird die Lehre von den letzten Dingen dann zumal jenes verkümmerte Stiefkind, jenes „harmlose eschatologische Kapitelchen" und „bedeutungslose Anhängsel" der Dogmatik ohne aktuelle Wucht und ohne systematische Betontheit und Wichtigkeit, das in Folge seiner sachlichen Unbedeutendheit auch formal schließlich ohne Verlust in Wegfall kommen könnte. Seine biblischen Wesenselemente (von Daniel bis zur Offenbarung Johannis) führen im geschichtskundlichen Museum, im „Raritätenkabinett, Unter-

abteilung jüdisch-apokalyptische Phantastik, ein Mumiendasein," und das biblizistisch-traditionelle „Amen" nach dem Eigentlich-Gesagten kann in der systematischen sachlichen Erörterung und Wesensbestimmung des Evangeliums ausgelassen werden. So setzt **Schleiermacher,** nicht nur der „jugendliche Romantiker" der „Reden," sondern auch noch der „Kirchenmann und Denkerfürst" der berühmten „Glaubenslehre," die Eschatologie hintan. Nicht nur nimmt er sachlich hier eine stärkst „negative" Haltung ein, indem weder der Glaube an Christi, noch der an unsre persönliche Unsterblichkeit notwendig (!) zu dem Christentum gehört, wie es in der Dogmatik vorgetragen wird. Er betrachtet auch formal die Eschatologie lediglich als minder wichtigen Anhang; denn den „Lehren von den letzten Dingen kann der gleiche Wert, wie den bisher behandelten Lehrstücken, nicht beigelegt werden" (§ 159 vgl. die kritischen Ausführungen Emil Brunners, „Die Mystik und das Wort," Seite 256 – 276). Ferner aber ist dann „für **Ritschl**" bezeichnend, daß „in seiner Definition des Christentums jede Erwähnung der Hoffnung und der eschatologischen Spannung fehlt." (P. Althaus.) Und durchaus charakteristisch war es, daß „in den bekanntesten und berühmtesten Darstellungen des Christentums, die sich an die . . . . Gebildeten und besonders die Zweifler unter diesen wenden, so in den populären Vorlesungen von **Harnack** und **Pfleiderer,** die Lehre von den letzten Dingen vollends verschwunden" war „und auch als peripherisches Stück des Christentums zu gelten aufgehört" (Hadorn) hatte!

2.

## Wieder auf dem Leuchter!

Hier aber hat nun **Karl Barth** die „kopernikanische" Wende gebracht. Seine Theologie bedeutet die entscheidende Wiederentdeckung und Wiederinthronisierung der Eschatologie, jenes „ältesten Dogmas der Kirche" (M. Kaehler), in Botschaft und Dogmatik. Freilich geschieht das bei Barth zunächst nur in einer bestimmten Verkürzung (auf die überzeitliche „Ewigkeits"-Beziehung) und einer stark philosophisch gerichteten Modifikation (nämlich der allgemeinen, steten „Dialektik" des „mündlichen qualitativen Gegensatzes" von „Zeit" und „Ewigkeit"). Aber Barths eigene Entwicklung und die Entwicklung seines Einflusses zeigen deutlich ein Fortschreiten und Vordringen von solchen Zeitgeist-bestimmten Anschauungen und Auffassungen zum „verbum Dei," zum biblischen Evangelium in seiner Eigenart und Ganzheit. Es geht grundwesentlich um eine biblisch-reformatorische Um-Orientierung, die von der Eschatologie beherrscht ist. Die Eschatologie wird nunmehr also vom Nach-Trag nach dem Eigentlich-zu-Sagenden zum eigentlichen Thema selbst, zum maß- und ziel-gebenden Grund-Datum und bannenden Grund-

Problem aller Dinge. Die totgeglaubte Lehre von den „Letzten Dingen" aufersteht zur Vor- und Allein-Herrschaft. „Das eschatologische Bureau," das vordem „zumeist geschlossen" (zitiert bei E. Troeltsch) war, ist heute wieder plötzlich mit allen Türen eröffnet, weil man es als den zentralen Aussichtsturm und die Ausschau-Warte wiedererkennt und wiedererrichtet, von dem aus allein unsre Welt und Lage und auch die biblische Botschaft richtig gesehen und verstanden werden kann. Nun wird alles zur Eschatologie (im Sinn von „Transzendenz"-Theologie allerdings zunächst): „Christentum, das nicht ganz und gar und restlos Eschatologie ist, hat mit Christus ganz und gar und restlos nichts zu tun." (K. Barth.) Also: „Nicht auch Auferstehung, nicht auch das Eschatologische, als notwendige Abrundung, die letzten Dinge als Schlußkapitel der Glaubenslehre. Es geht um nichts anders als um die letzten Dinge." (E. Brunner.)

3.

### Durch die „eschatologische" Schrift!

Woher und wodurch dieser Umschwung? Bei allen großen reformatorischen Wiederentdeckungen war letzlich stets das „verbum Dei," das „Wort Gottes" im biblischen Offenbarungszeugnis (zumal des „Theologen" Paulus) der treibende und klärende Faktor — von Augustin über Luther und Calvin zu Barth. Die „eschatologische" Schrift machte und macht Barth zum „eschatologischen" Verkünder und Theologen. Aufmerksam geworden auf das „ebenso unbegreifliche wie unleugbare epidemische Stillgestelltsein und Umgekehrtwerden der **biblischen** Menschen mit ihrem Sehen des Unsichtbaren und Hören des Unerhörten," wird auch Barth gelehrt und geübt, nun wieder „genau so steil nach oben zu sehen wie die Gestalten, die uns in der Heiligen Schrift entgegentreten." „Wer ist denn Gott? Was ist sein Wille? Was sind seine Gedanken? Was ist das geheimnisvolle Andere, Neue, Größere, das da in der Bibel hinter und über allem Menschenwesen auftaucht und uns auffordert zu der Entscheidung: Glauben oder Unglauben?" (K. Barth.) Auf diese durchdringende Frage an die Bibel ertönte die Posaune des jüngsten Gesichts. In seinem praktischen pastoralen Amt, in den schwer und schwerst genommenen Nöten der Predigtvorbereitung als „Minister Verbi Divini" in seiner Landgemeinde Safenwil im Schweizerischen Kanton Aargau, hat also letzten Endes das eindringlichste, tiefstgrabende Studium der Schrift, zumal des Paulus, auch die „eschatologische" Perspektive wieder eröffnet als die grundwesentliche Perspektive des biblischen Evangeliums. So entstand Barths wahrlich „Epoche"-machender „Römerbrief"-Kommentar. Wahrlich: „die Schrift überwindet die Not." (H. E. Weber.) Wie bei Luthers reformatorischer Entdeckung letztlich die

Schriftmeditation und das Sprechen des „verbum Dei" selber darin (auf jenem Wittenberger Klosterturm) das Entscheidende war, so auch bei Barth. Aber er hatte selbstverständlich **Helfer** in dem Ringen um Verständnis und Auslegung, Hinweiser und Bestätiger, die zugleich auch als Wegbereiter seines Einflusses in der protestantischen Welt dienen. Zu den Kronzeugen, die hier in Betracht kommen und auch von Barth selber an- und aufgerufen werden, gehören zumal zwei. Der eine ist der sonst totgeschwiegene Gelehrte Franz Overbeck, der einsame kritisch-skeptische Außenseiter an der Basler Universität, der „selten fromme Mann"*: er sah das Wesentliche am Urchristentum in seiner Weltverneinung und Parusieerwartung und bestritt darum die Christlichkeit der neueren Theologie, die dies Wesentlichste aufgegeben, in radikalem Angriff, wobei er seine scharfe negative Kritik in oft spöttisch-vernichtendem Ton auszusenden wußte. Der andre ist **J. Christoph Blumhardt,** der anders als Overbeck positiv-enthusiastisch vorwärts gewandte „Wächter an der Schwelle eschatologisch-realer Gotteskräfte" (M. Strauch), der Pfarrer des Gebets-Wunders und der Erweckung zu Möttlingen (einem Dorf am nördlichen Ende des Schwarzwaldes, nordöstlich von Calw) im Zeichen der eschatologischen „großen Erwartung," seit (am 28. Dezember 1843) der böse Geist aus seiner Patientin fuhr mit deutlich vernehmbaren, brüllenden Rufen: „Jesus ist Sieger! Jesus ist Sieger!"† Neben diesen beiden ausgeprägten und hervortretenden Individualgestalten aber ist Barth für das „eschatologische" Verständnis der Bibel, des Evangeliums und Christentums ein „Wegbereiter" zu Hilfe gekommen, der stärkste und allgemeinste Beachtung beansprucht: **die neuste historische biblische Forschung** im großen Hauptstrom der modernen wissenschaftlichen Theologie selber! Seit der Wende des Jahrhunderts hat sie in steigernder Anerkennung gegen die sogenannte „liberale," die modernisierende, ethisierende und spiritualisierende Bibelauslegung reagiert und opponiert, indem sie **die „eschatologische" Hoffnung** als die fundamentale Anschauung des Urchristentums wieder erfaßte und wissenschaftlich ans Licht hielt. Geistesgeschichtlich beginnt also die „eschatologische" Neu-Orientierung der Theologie in der neu-

*) „Cum grano salis." Nicht mit Recht von Barth also benannt, da er selber kein eigenes positives Verhältnis zum Christentum hatte. Vgl. **Walter Rigg,** Franz Overbeck. Versuch einer Würdigung 1931. (C. H. Beck, München.) Dazu: **F. Overbeck,** „Christentum und Kultur." Edidit post mortem **C. A. Bernoulli** 1919. (Verlag Benno Schwabe, Basel.)

†) Vgl. **Eugen Jaeckh,** Blumhardt Vater und Sohn, und ihre Botschaft. 2. Berlin 1925. Vgl. auch die Novelle „Blumhardts Kampf" von **Eduard Reinacher,** Stimme der Erde, Erzählungen 1928. (Chr. Kaiser-Verlag, München). Ueber „Christoph Blumhardt" den Sohn vgl. **Eduard Thurneysen.** (Chr. Kaiser-Verlag, München.)

testamentlichen Forschung, zwanzig Jahre vor ihrem Durchbruch in der systematischen Theologie. Die Wiederentdeckung geschah auf **„historischem"** Weg in der „Leben-Jesu-Forschung." Der erwachende und geschulte „geschichtliche" Sinn in der Bibelwissenschaft war es, der sich dagegen wandte, daß man die eigenen „modernen" Ideen und Ideale naiv hineinlas in die geschichtlichen Urkunden der urchristlichen Zeit, und der wieder aufmerksam zu werden lehrte auf all das Andersartige, Fremde, Seltsame und Wunderbare dieser Vergangenheit im Unterschied von der Gegenwart. So wurde die „End-Erwartung" wieder als das eigentliche Kernstück erfaßt in der biblisch-apostolischen Verkündigung; und es wurde das historisch getreue „eschatologische" Jesusbild an die Stelle des üblichen „liberal" modernisierten Jesus-Bildes gesetzt, in dem die „eschatologischen" Züge fast völlig verwischt waren. Freilich bedeutete diese Entdeckung, zumal in ihrem „Archaisieren," für den Gegenwartsglauben und die dogmatische Theologie zunächst eine Enttäuschung und ein negatives Resultat: es bedeutete zunächst ein **Fern-Rücken** Jesu in weitem Abstand weg von der Moderne in die jüdische Antike und deren fremde wie vergängliche „Zeitgeschichtlichkeit." „Ein Hauptstück aus Jesu geistiger Welt schien sich als Irrtum herauszustellen, zeitgeschichtlich bedingt, dem neuzeitlichen Weltbild unerträglich, bestenfalls als unwesentlicher Rahmen der eigentlichen Predigt Jesu zu verstehen" (M. Dibelius): eben die Nah-Erwartung einer baldigen kosmischen Katastrophe in den Vorstellungen des alten Weltbildes. Das allerdings war — und ist! — alles andre als eine befriedigende **„systematische"** Einschätzung und Verwertung der „historischen" Wiederentdeckung. Sollte das eigentliche Kernstück des urchristlichen Evangeliums etwas Unwesentliches sein? Hier hat erst Karl Barth dann den „systematischen" Hebel ebenso mächtig (oder mächtiger!) angesetzt wie zwanzig Jahre vor ihm Johannes Weiß und Albert Schweitzer den „geschichtlichen." So wurde denn die Wiederentdeckung der historischen Theologie positiv in das systematische theologische Denken aufgenommen: man erfaßte die Eschatologie, welche also die historische Bibelwissenschaft schon seit längerem als Kern der geschichtlichen Bibelreligion erkannt und ans Licht gestellt hatte, nunmehr endlich auch als Wesenskern der biblischen Botschaft überhaupt und also auch eben unseres Gegenwartsglaubens. Und nun kann hier Glaube und Systematik wiederum in fruchtbarster Weise sich gründen und stützen („cum grano salis!") auf diese Ergebnisse der historischen Forschung oder wenigstens Bestätigung und Anregungen von ihnen empfangen und aus ihnen ziehen. „Eine durchgreifende Relativierung aller vorletzten Gedanken und Dinge, eine Bereitschaft für letzte Fragen und Antworten, ein Warten und Eilen letzten Entscheidungen entgegen, ein Lau-

schen auf den Ton der letzten Posaune — die von der Wahrheit Kunde gibt, die jenseits der Gräber ist: das ist die Gotteserkenntnis, die als Abschluß und Inbegriff des Alten Testamentes im Neuen ans Licht tritt" (K. Barth); denn: „Wenn überhaupt von gesicherten Resultaten der geschichtlichen Bibelforschung gesprochen werden kann, dann ist unter den wenigen Erkenntnissen, die auf diesen Titel Anspruch erheben können, die vornehmste die, daß das ganze neutestamentliche Denken eschatologisch, endgeschichtlich, orientiert sei. Das vorstellungsmäßige Wie schwankt nicht unbeträchtlich, aber über das Das und Was besteht vollkommenste Einstimmigkeit: Glauben heißt hoffen auf die Königsherrschaft Gottes, auf den neuen Aion, die Welt Gottes, wo das „Stückwerk aufhört," wo „Leid und Geschrei nicht mehr sein wird, und auch der Tod wird nicht mehr sein." Auf die „Zeit," da Gott sein wird alles und in allem, und „wir werden ihm gleich sein, denn wir werden ihn sehen, wie er ist." (E. Brunner.)

## 4.

## Das Wesen des „Eschatologischen."

Was ist denn nun das Wesen des „Eschatologischen"? Eschatologie bedeutet die Lehre von den **„Letzten Dingen"** in der Heilserwartungsperspektive, d. h. die Lehre von den Heilsgütern und der Verwirklichung der Heilsgüter, die am Ende und Ausgang, eben „jenseits" unsers irdisch-menschlichen Lebens stehen, sowohl des persönlichen Einzellebens (Tod, Gericht, Himmel und Hölle) wie zumal des geschichtlich-natürlichen Gesamtlebens der ganzen Menschheit und der ganzen Welt. (Jüngster Tag, jüngstes Gericht und Weltverwandlung.) Von diesen „letzten Dingen" (vom „letzten" Stündlein bis zum „letzten" Gericht) handelt das Kapitel der „Eschatologie," meist das „letzte" Kapitel in unsern Dogmatiken: es handelt also von der **„transzendenten" Seite und Aussicht des Heils** im Unterschied von der „geschichtlich-gegenwärtigen" Heilsverwirklichung hier und jetzt in unserm „diesweltlichen" Leben. Aber diese Bestimmung zeigt zunächst ja nur ganz allgemein auf eine bestimmte Seite des Heils und die entsprechenden Probleme, zum Unterschied von andern Seiten und Problem-Kreisen im System des Glaubens und der Glaubenslehre. Eine „eschatologische" Einstellung wäre also eine **Einstellung auf diese Seite des Heils,** ein Gerichtetsein auf die „Transzendenz," auf die „Ewigkeit," das „ewige Seelenheil," das „ewige Leben," die „ewige Seligkeit." Ein strengerer und richtigerer Sprachgebrauch aber versteht darunter eine solche Einstellung in einer ganz **besonderen Heilserwartung,** im Gegensatz zu andern Heils-Auffassungen und Heils-Erwartungen. Diese „eschatologische" Heilserwartung ist die Heilserwartung im Sinn einer

am „jüngsten Tag" kommenden kosmischen Heils-Katastrophe, im Sinn einer „transzendenten" Heilung dieser unsrer ganzen Welt in einen „neuen Himmel und eine neue Erde" voll „ewigen Lebens" und „ewiger Seligkeit." Solche Heilserwartung steht im Gegensatz etwa zu der „mystischen" wie der „rationalistischen" und „idealistischen" oder „evolutionistischen." Sie ist die des biblischen Evangeliums. Was aber sind die charakteristischen Elemente, die diese „eschatologische" Heilserwartung ausmachen zum Unterschied von jenen andern fälschlichen? Auf drei bedeutungsvolle Komponenten möchte ich hier hinweisen:

1. Zuerst: Das „Heil" betrifft hier unsre ganze konkrete Welt, die „geheilt" werden soll; denn diese **unsre konkrete Welt** ist **Gottes „Schöpfung,"** die der lebendige Herr hervorrief aus dem Nichts als konkreten, lebensvollen Schauplatz seiner Gnadenherrlichkeit. Als solche „Schöpfung" Gottes ist darum unsre Welt sinnvoll und wird im Heil wiederhergestellt existieren in ihrer ganzen „kreatürlichen" Lebenskonkretheit und Verwirklichungsfülle und -bewegtheit von Personhaftigkeit und Leibhaftigkeit und kosmischer Natur. Mit dieser Einsicht und Einschätzung der kreatürlich-konkreten Welt aber steht die biblische „eschatologische" Heils-Erwartung entschieden gegen die der „Mystik" (im strengen „religionsgeschichtlichen" Sinn dieses leider oft zuallgemein gebrauchten Terminus). Denn die „Mystik" hat, auf Grund des starken Empfindens der Eitelkeit und Nichtigkeit dieser unsrer konkreten Welt, diese echte „Schöpfungs"-Einschätzung eben nicht. Ihr Heils-Verlangen ist vielmehr ein Verlangen nach Erlösung „von" dieser Welt statt nach Erlösung dieser Welt eben selbst. Und das Heil, das sie erwartet, ist eine Erlösung von dem als sinnlos empfundenen „Stoff," „Schein" und „Fluß" unsrer nichtigen Schattenwelt in einen entsprechenden „statischen" Zustand abstrakter und quietistischer Ruhe, ohne Konkretheit und Bewegtheit, ohne Personhaftigkeit, Leibhaftigkeit und kosmische Materialität. Dies vermeintliche Heil ist pure Geistigkeit, ein plantonische Welt der „Ideen" oder ein buddhistisches „Nichts" (als Ausdruck höchster gegensätzlicher Abstrahierung von aller irdischen Weltkonkretheit), ein Untertauchen und Versinken des Geist-Tröpfchens im Menschen zurück in Meer und Quell der Gottheit. Wie hat die „eschatologische" Heilsbotschaft des Christentums ringen müssen gegen solche „spiritualisierende" Tendenz der „Mystik," seit es missionierend den Boden des „mystischen" Hellenismus betrat, bis heute, für die tiefe, paradoxe Erwartung der „Auferstehung des Fleisches!"

2 Der zweite Faktor aber der biblischen „eschatologischen" Heilserwartung betrifft das, was man gegenüber einer modernen „evolutionistischen," empiriziistisch-rationalistischen Weltanschauung die **„eschatologisch-dualistische" Weltanschauung** nennen möchte. Denn

bei aller tiefen Einschätzung unsrer konkreten Welt als Gottes „Schöpfung" weiß die eschatologische Heils-Erwartung der Schrift doch ebenso in tiefstem „Realismus" um die Tatsache, daß diese Welt eine **„gefallene"** Schöpfung ist. Hier steht sie im Gegensatz zu den modernen „Nationalismen" und wiederum der „Mystik" näher. Nur eben viel tiefer als die Mystik, viel radikaler, viel paradoxer faßt sie das Elend und die Nichtigkeit der Welt. Sie faßt es als eine Sünden- und Fluchgesetzlichkeit über unserm ganzen Kosmos mit allem, was darinnen existiert, also nicht nur über dem Sinnlichen und Stofflichen, sondern ebenso auch über den tiefsten menschlichen „Geist," den die Mystik gern ausnehmen möchte und betrachten möchte als den Punkt verbliebener göttlicher Immanenz und Verbindungsbrücke zur transzendenten „reinen" Geistsphäre. Höchste Einschätzung also dieser konkreten Welt verbindet sich mit tiefster Abschätzung in dieser „eschatologisch-dualistischen" Formel der „gefallenen Schöpfung." Der Allmächtige und Allgute hat die „Schöpfung" gut, ja „sehr gut" geschaffen, aber der Ungehorsams-„Fall" des Menschen riß sie hinab in die Verfallenheit unter die Dämonie des „Kampfes ums Dasein" und den Fluch des „Sterbenmüssens," in die vom Ethischen bis ins Biologische unser ganzes Sein nunmehr gebannt und gebunden ist. Das „Heil" bedeutet hier nichts anders als die realistische **„Wiederherstellung"** der „gefallenen," verderbten Schöpfung in „kosmisch"-universaler katastrophaler Umwandlung, die die ganze natürlich-geschichtliche, auch die grundlegende biologisch-naturhafte Struktur der Welt in ihrer Grundgesetzlichkeit erschüttert und transformiert. Sie transformiert sie in die wunderbare, überirdische, „paradiesische" Reinheit und „himmlische" Unversehrtheit, in der es weder Sünde, noch „Kampf ums Dasein" noch den „Tod" mehr geben wird! (Offenbarung Johannis.)

3. Dazu ein Drittes, das nicht übersehen werden darf: die **Nähe** dieses Heils! Die eschatologische Heils-Erwartung ist „Nah"-Erwartung: „Nahe-herangekommen ist das Reich der Himmel," d. h. das Ende und die „Wiedergeburt" der Welt (Matth. 19, 28). Von den Propheten über die Evangelien bis zum übrigen Neuen Testament spricht die Heilsbotschaft von dieser „Nähe," zur „Wachsamkeit" mahnend. Und wo immer in der christlichen Kirchengeschichte eine neue Aufmerksamkeit auftrat auf diesen „eschatologischen" Charakter des Evangeliums, da trat zugleich auch dies Gefühl der spannenden Nähe auf, nicht nur bei den Sekten, sondern auch — bei Luther (die Sehnsucht nach dem „lieben, jüngsten Tag")! Ganz gewiß haben wir das Wesen dieser aktuellen „Nähe" so nüchtern-vorsichtig wie zugleich so deutlich wie möglich herauszuarbeiten, um weder einer illusionistischen Schwärmerei noch aber

auch einer armen Verkürzung und Verwässerung zu verfallen. Aktuell „nahe“ ist dieses Heil, sofern es in der jenseitigen himmlischen Welt Gottes, in der Welt der „Ewigkeit“ schon enthalten und vor-Handen ist und, heranbrechend und immer näher kommend (Röm. 13, 11 f.), jeden unsrer Augenblicke bedrängt, „bereit zur Offenbarung in der letzten Zeit“ (1. Petr. 1, 3—5): so „steht der Richter vor der Tür.“ (Jak. 5, 9.)

# Die Betätigung des christlichen Charakters gegenüber seinem geistlichen Wesen.

Von Prof. Dr. R. H. Grützmacher.

## II.

Bleibt auch der natürliche Charakter die Grundlage des christlichen, so kommt dessen spezifische Eigenart erst in seinem geistlichen Wesen zum Ausdruck. Dieses ist und bleibt bedingt durch die Mittel und die Art seiner Entstehung. Auch der natürliche Mensch besitzt Sittlichkeit im Sinn der Unterscheidung von Gut und Böse, da er im Besitz des Gewissens ist. Aber seine sittlichen Ziele sind inhaltlich sehr verschieden und darum nur relativ, wie die Geschichte der menschlichen Lebensideale deutlich beweist. Ein absolutes sittliches Ziel kann darum nur durch Offenbarung gegeben werden. Sie hat sich für den Christen in der Person und Predigt Jesu im Zusammenhang mit dem Alten Testament und der apostolischen Verkündung vollzogen. In dieser Offenbarung werden zugleich die Kräfte lebendig, die es dem Menschen ermöglichen seine natürliche Willensrichtung aufzugeben und sie auf die christliche umzustellen.

Das einzige und dauernde Mittel, Gehalt wie Kraft der christlichen Offenbarung zugänglich zu machen, ist das Wort der Bibel und der kirchlichen Verkündigung und zwar unter ethischem Gesichtspunkt in der doppelten Gestalt als **Gesetz und Evangelium.** Der allgemeine Begriff des Gesetzes als Mittel ethischer Einwirkung bezeichnete das Stück objektiver Sitte, das mit zwangsmäßiger äußerer Verbindlichkeit umkleidet ist. Sein Wert besteht zunächst darin, daß es dem unethischen Willen des natürlichen Menschen wenigstens äußere Schranken setzt und ihn an die Existenz und Macht unbedingt geltender Forderungen gewöhnt. Auch die christliche Offenbarung ist und bleibt für den Menschen so lange Gesetz, als sie ihm nur fordernd und verurteilend entgegentritt. Selbst die Gestalt Jesu kann für den Menschen die Züge des Gesetzes tragen, wenn er ihm nur als besonders strenger Gesetzgeber — in der Bergpredigt — und als Richter in den eschatologischen Reden — erscheint **Das Gesetz ist die erste Form, in der das göttliche Wort dem Menschen naht, um ihm die grundsätzliche Distanz seines Willens zu der göttlichen Forderung klar zu machen und zugleich seine Ohnmacht, ihr aus eigener Kraft zu entsprechen.** Das Evangelium erscheint in dem Augenblick, in welchem die Offenbarung trotzdem die Verbindung des Menschen mit Gott herstellt, indem dieser in Christus sich als der vergebende und gebende erschließt. Die bisherige verkehrte Willensrichtung des Menschen wird von Gott im Evangelium nicht mehr als Schuld angerechnet, sondern in Gnade ver-

geben. Damit ist von Gottes Seite die Distanz aufgehoben. Zugleich aber werden auch durch das Evangelium die Kräfte dargereicht, die den menschlichen Willen ein Eingreifen und Verwirklichen des christlichen Lebensideales ermöglichen. **Die Gestalt Jesu erscheint im Evangelium, als die des vergebenden Heilandes und des mächtigen Königs, der seine sittliche Herrschaft unter den Menschen durchsetzt.**

Da der christliche Charakter in dieser Zeitlichkeit niemals ein vollendeter wird, gehört zu seiner Betätigung im Interesse seines geistlichen Lebens nicht nur der Gebrauch des Evangeliums, sondern auch des Gesetzes. Sobald nämlich der Christ in seine alte sündige Richtung zurückzufallen oder in seinem sittlichen Streben nachzulassen droht, hat er sich wieder unter das Gesetz zu stellen. Er muß sich klar machen, was Gott von ihm fordert und was er an ihm verurteilt. Nicht nur am Anfang, sondern immer wieder müssen christliche Charaktere „conscientiae perterrefactae" werden. Infolgedessen ist auch der christlichen Gemeinde in Predigt und Unterricht stets das Gesetz zu verkünden und zwar weniger in seiner alttestamentlichen, schattenhaften Form als in der vollkommenen Heiligkeit und Reinheit der Gestalt Jesu, die dem Menschen am erschütterndsten seine Distanz und Ohnmacht gegenüber der göttlichen Vollkommenheit zu Bewußtsein bringt. Erst recht aber wird sich der christliche Charakter immer wieder dem Evangelium mit seinen vergebenden und erneuernden Kräften zuwenden. Das wird nicht nur in der Form der einfachen Lesung biblischer Schriften oder im Anhören der kirchlichen Verkündigung geschehen, sondern auch in persönlicher und intensiver **„meditatio"** und **„contemplatio."** Wenn neuere ethische Anweisungen — im Anschluß an besonders in Indien geübte Methoden — starkes Gewicht auf die stille Selbstversenkung und die konzentrierte Betrachtung legen, so kann auch die christliche Ethik gerade diese Betätigungen als durchaus wertvoll annehmen. Gerade für den modernen Menschen mit seiner ununterbrochenen Angespanntheit und Zerstreuung in Beruf wie Genuß, ist es notwendig, daß er stille Stunden oder wenigstens täglich einige Minuten für sich hat, in denen er über sein inneres Leben nachdenkt. Die christliche Ethik erwartet allerdings, daß sich mit dem Blick nach innen auch die Aufschau nach oben verbindet. Der Mensch soll sich nicht damit begnügen, sein eigenes Ich auf Wert und Unwert zu untersuchen, sondern gerade auch die objektiven Größen von Gesetz und Evangelium zum Gegenstand der Betrachtung machen, damit sie ihn über die eigene Schuld hinausführen und ihm Kräfte des Neuwerdens vermitteln.

Der christliche Charakter befindet sich in einem stetigen **Kampf** um die Erhaltung und Vervollkommnung seines geistlichen Wesens. Wenn die Bibel selbst Jesus versucht werden läßt, seinen göttlichen

Beruf aufzugeben oder ihn nur durch irdische Mittel zu verwirklichen, so wird erst recht der einfache Christ solchen Versuchungen ausgesetzt sein. Mit ihnen rechnen die neutestamentlichen Schriften und mahnen darum zu ununterbrochener Wachsamkeit (Matth. 26. 41, 1. Thess. 5, 6, 1. Petri 5, 8). Der Mensch soll nüchtern den Gefahren ins Auge sehen, sich über ihre ganze Größe klar werden, aber auch sein volles Vertrauen auf Gottes Kraft setzen, die stärker als alle Versuchung ist und auch diese als Mittel der Erziehung und Förderung zu benutzen weiß. Nicht nur die Erzählung von katholischen Heiligen, sondern auch das Leben der Reformatoren ist von Versuchungen und inneren Kämpfen angefüllt. Als schwerste unter ihnen gilt die **Anfechtung der Gottverlassenheit,** die auch Jesus am Kreuz durchlebte. Dem Menschen erscheint seine Gottverbundenheit als subjektive Illusionen, er glaubt nicht mehr an die göttliche Vergebung; das sittliche Ideal verliert an Anziehungskraft und die bisher vollzogenen guten Werke verlieren den Charakter der Echtheit. In einer solchen Situation hat der Christ sich zunächst zu sagen, daß seine persönlichen Empfindungen nicht der sichere Gradmesser für den wirklichen Stand seines religiös-sittlichen Wesens sind. Schon im natürlichen Leben gibt es Schmerzen, deren subjektive Stärke durchaus nicht eine objektiv schwere Erkrankung anzeigt; während umgekehrt eine solche vorliegen kann, trotzdem sich der Mensch schmerzlos oder gar wohl befindet. In der religiösen Sphäre kann man fast das Gesetz aufstellen: Je stärker der Mensch seine Distanz zu Gott schmerzlich empfindet, um so näher ist er ihm, während die, welche des göttlichen Wohlgefallens ganz sicher sind, ihm recht fern stehen. **Ist demnach das Gefühl kein sicherer Barometer für den Hoch- oder Tiefstand eines christlichen Charakters, so sind seine praktischen Auswirkungen bedeutend zuverlässigere Maßstäbe.** Jesus sagt im Bezug auf seine Jünger: An ihren Früchten werdet ihr sie erkennen; der erste Johannisbrief vollzieht immer wieder den Rückschluß aus der praktischen Nächstenliebe auf eine wirklich vorhandene Gottesgemeinschaft. Für die Reformatoren, besonders Calvin sind die guten Werke ein sicherer Erkenntnisgrund für eine echte Verbundenheit mit Gott, ja für eine vorzeitige Erwählung. Ist der christliche Charakter nicht in der Lage, aus Glaube und Liebe heraus seine Beziehung zu Gott und der Welt zu gestalten oder bewegen sich seine Taten nicht wenigstens in dieser Linie, dann hat er berechtigten Grund an dem Vorhandensein seines geistlichen Wesens zu zweifeln und besondre Mittel zu seiner Wiederherstellung einzusetzen. Als eins der Mittel, um den christlichen Charakter bei geistlicher Erkrankung wiederherzustellen, kommt die Askese in Betracht.

Der Begriff der **Askese** spielt in der katholischen Ethik eine so große Rolle, daß einer ihrer Hauptteile den Titel „Asketik" trägt.

Aber auch in der neueren philosophischen, kulturgeschichtlichen, selbst nationalökonomischen Literatur nehmen Untersuchungen über Wesen und Wirkung der Askese eine hervorragende Stellung ein; so z. B. bei dem Nationalökonomen Max Weber in seiner Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen und bei dem Religionsphilosophen Ernst Tröltsch in seinen Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen. Schon in den außer- und vorchristlichen Religionen und Philosophien nimmt die Askese eine bedeutsame Stelle ein und läßt einen besonderen Typus deutlich hervortreten.

Prinzipiell und rein asketisch ist die Ethik des Buddhismus. Sie verwirft nicht nur alle Güter der irdischen Welt und jede Beziehung zu ihnen, sondern sucht auch den persönlichen Willen als Träger eines aktiven sittlichen Lebens restlos aufzulösen. Die Askese ist nicht nur Mittel, sondern zugleich auch Zweck des sittlichen Handelns. Im Platonismus macht die Askese die eine Hälfte des gesamten sittlichen Handelns aus. Sie wendet sich gegen alle innerweltlichen materiellen Güter und Beziehungen, verlangt — mit einem Wort — „Flucht aus der Welt." Aber gerade durch dieses negative Handeln gegenüber der Materialität, soll das geistige Element im Menschen befreit werden und die Seele wieder in die unsterblich-göttliche Wirklichkeit zurückkehren.

Diese Auffassungen der Askese haben im Lauf der Geschichte auch auf das Christentum hinübergewirkt und seine selbständige Konzeption geschädigt. — Denn das alttestamentlich-jüdische Lebensideal ist bei der Anerkennung der göttlichen Schöpfungsgüter und der sittlichen Aktivität in dieser Weltwesentlich unasketisch gerichtet. Auf alttestamentlichen Boden steht auch Jesus, der weder mit dem Buddhismus daran denkt die gesamte Welt und die menschliche Persönlichkeit aufzugeben, noch auch mit dem Platonismus die materielle Seite um der geistigen willen zu verleugnen. Dennoch stellt Jesus negative Forderungen von außerordentlicher Stärke, wie die Aufgabe einzelner wertvoller Glieder, um das geistliche Leben zu erhalten. Nicht minder fordert er von einzelnen Menschen die Hingabe ihres ganzen Besitztumes oder den Verzicht auf familiäre Beziehungen. **Bei Jesus gewinnt die Askese den Charakter eines Opfers d. h. der Hingabe eines niederen Wertes um eines höheren willen.** Um das Reich Gottes zu erlangen kann von einem Menschen ein Verzicht auf Familie und Besitz verlangt werden, wenn diese — an sich wertvollen — Güter die Erlangung des höchsten Gutes unmöglich machen. Den reichen Jüngling hinderte sein Besitz an der Nachfolge Jesu. Auf der andern Seite liegt aber in dieser Haltung Jesu die prinzipielle Möglichkeit beschlossen, daß niedere Güter in den Dienst des höchsten gestellt werden können. Am Kreuz verbindet er seinen Jünger Johannes mit seiner eigenen Mutter, weil gerade durch diese menschliche Gemeinschaft die Liebe zu Gott geför-

dert wird. Der irdische Besitz kann und soll in den Dienst der Nächstenliebe gestellt werden. **Christliche Askese trägt darum sowohl den negativen Charakter des Opfers wie den positiven der Indienststellung irdischer Güter in den des höchsten.** Auch Luther kennt die Askese im Sinn irdischen Opfers an sich wertvoller Güter zur Erhaltung des ewigen Reiches: „Nehmen sie den Leib, Gut, Ehr, Kind und Weib, laß fahren dahin . . . das Reich muß uns doch bleiben!" Anderseits hat gerade Luther durch die Anschauung, daß der himmlische Beruf sich nur im Rahmen des irdischen vollzieht die positive Ausnutzung aller innerweltlichen Betätigungen und Güter deutlich vertreten. — **Der christliche Charakter wird demnach bereit sein durch negative Askese irdisch wertvolle Güter und Beziehungen zu opfern, wenn und so weit sie ihn an der Erreichung des christlichen Ideales hindern; er wird aber vor allem positive Askese üben — Askese bedeutet im ursprünglichen Wortsinn Uebung —, um diese Welt in den Dienst des Reiches Gottes zu stellen.**

Die Formen und Mittel der Askese sind nicht allgemeingültig festzulegen. Aeußere Zurückziehung aus der Welt garantiert keineswegs die innere Lösung von ihr. Wird doch nicht selten von den Heiligen erzählt, daß sie gerade in der Wüste allen Versuchungen besonders ausgesetzt waren. Anderseits kann selbstverständlich auch die Form der Weltflucht, wie etwa bei Johannes dem Täufer, von einem christlichen Charakter zeitweilig oder dauernd betätigt werden. Die spezifisch protestantische Form der Askese ist allerdings nach einem von Max Weber geprägtem Begriff die **„innerweltliche Askese."**

Der Mensch betätigt sich im Rahmen eines irdischen Berufes, er gründet eine Familie, er leistet dem Staat Dienst und genießt alle erlaubten Güter dieser Welt. Aber er läßt sich von dem Allem nicht so fesseln, daß er die Vergänglichkeit der Welt vergißt und das transzendente Ziel des Reiches Gottes vernachlässigt. Denn gerade das Leben in der Welt bringt dem Menschen die deutlichste Erkenntnis ihrer Vergänglichkeit und der Notwendigkeit, sie durch eine andre Wirklichkeit zu ersetzen. In beruflichen Mißerfolgen, im Zusammenbruch der Familie, in den Kämpfen der Völker erlebt der Mensch so viele Hemmungen und Leiden, daß allmählich eine „mortificatio" eintritt. Es ist darum nicht nötig, sich künstlich besondere Entsagungen aufzuerlegen, wie das vielfach in der Geschichte der christlichen Askese geschehen ist.

Zu diesen künstlichen Mitteln sind auch die sogenannten **Gelübde** zu rechnen, über deren Bewertung selbst in der christlichen Ethik wenig Klarheit herrscht. In den außerchristlichen Religionen sind Gelübde eine Art vergeistigten Zaubers. Der Mensch gelobt Gott einen bestimmten Genuß — etwa einen Teil der Beute — und will ihn dadurch nötigen, seine Wünsche zu erfüllen. Oder er will

Gott durch ein Entsagungsgelübde zeigen, wie ernst er es mit seiner Religion nimmt, aber doch auch dadurch Gott in seiner Haltung beeinflussen. Eine derartige Einwirkung auf Gott widerspricht der christlichen Grundüberzeugung, daß wir Gott nichts geben können, was er nicht schon besäße oder ohne weiteres fordern könnte. **Gelübde können darum niemals eine Bedeutung für Gott, sondern höchstens für den Menschen haben**; aber auch in dieser Richtung unterliegen sie ethischen Bedenken. Der evangelische Christ sieht in dem ganzen Umfang seine Betätigung nichts anders, als seine sittliche Pflicht. Erkennt er etwa, daß der Alkohol seine Gesundheit und seiner Arbeitskraft schadet, so ist er ohne weiteres zur Abstinenz verpflichtet. Kommt er zu der Ueberzeugung, daß jeder in seinem Volk schwere Verheerungen anrichtet, so ist er um der brüderlichen Liebe und des Beispieles willen verpflichtet, auch seinerseits Mäßigkeit zu üben. In Wirklichkeit kann allerdings auch dem christlichen Charakter ein Verzicht auf Lieblingsgenüsse so schwer werden, daß er diesen nicht ohne besondre Maßregeln und Bindungen fertig bringt. Aus dieser Erkenntnis können und dürfen die sogenannten Blaukreuz- und Weißkreuzgelübde erwachsen. **Solche Gelübde bedeuten aber nicht eine höhere Stufe der Sittlichkeit gegenüber einer aus immer erneutem freien Entschluß erwachsenden Askese, sondern sie stellen eine Rückkehr zur gesetzlichen Bindung dar.** Es ist aber natürlich immer noch besser, wenn der Mensch durch ein gesetzliches Gelübde seinem Begehren Schranken setzt, als wenn er es schrankenlos auslebt.

Das Ziel der Betätigung des christlichen Charakters gegenüber seinem eigenen geistlichen Lebens besteht in der Herausarbeitung seiner Vollkommenheit. Der vollkommene christliche Charakter ist im Besitz der hauptsächlichen **christlichen Tugenden.** Der Begriff der Tugend im Sinn von Tüchtigkeit, Tauglichkeit bedeutet zunächst die körperlich männliche Tüchtigkeit, ist aber schon von der griechischen Philosophie zur Bezeichnung ethischer Vollkommenheit verwandt. Die Tugend soll das Vermögen zum Maßhalten bedeuten und sich in die vier Haupttugenden der Weisheit, Tapferkeit, Besonnenheit, Gerechtigkeit zerlegen. Im Neuen Testament wird dieser griechische Tugendbegriff nur 2. Petri 1, 5 berücksichtigt, dagegen in der alten und mittelalterlichen Kirche wieder aufgenommen. Zu den vier natürlichen Kardinaltugenden werden die drei theologischen: Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung zuaddiert, so daß die Vollkommenheit des christlichen Charakters in diesen sieben Tugenden besteht.

Allein dieses Schema entspricht nicht dem geistlichen Wesen des christlichen Charakters, dessen Wesensmerkmale vielmehr aus seinem Verhältnis zu Gott und den Menschen abzuleiten sind. **Glaube und Liebe sind die beiden Grundtugenden, aus denen sich alle übrigen ergeben.** Nicht bloß das religiöse, sondern auch das ethische Ver-

halten des Christen gegenüber Gott ist der Glaube. Im umfassendsten Sinn verstanden, ist er die unbeschränkte Bereitwilligkeit zur Hinnahme des göttlichen Wesens mit allen seinen Forderungen und Gaben. Der Glaube ist vollkommene Rezeptivität, die geöffnete Hand, die sich füllen, der Ring, der sich den Edelstein einfügen läßt — um in Bildern aus den reformatorischen Schriften zu sprechen. Offenbart Gott in der Geschichte bestimmte Erkenntnisse seines Wesens und seiner Absicht mit der Menschheit, so nimmt der gläubige Mensch dankbar von ihnen Kenntnis und stimmt ihnen zu. Der Glaube ist zunächst „notitia" und „assensus." Sein innerstes Wesen aber kommt in der „fiducia," in dem festen Vertrauen zum Ausdruck, daß alle Offenbarung Gottes das Heil will. Aus diesem Vertrauen heraus leistet der Glaube Gott Gehorsam und zwar nicht den des Sklaven, sondern des Kindes. **Glaube ist die innere Bereitwilligkeit, auf Gottes Wirksamkeit vertrauensvoll und gehorsam einzugehen.** — Der Glaube wird zur Hoffnung, wenn er diese Seelenhaltung auch auf die Zukunft erstreckt. **Die Hoffnung ist nur ein Projektion der Eigenart des Glaubens über die Gegenwart hinaus** und insofern keine besondre Tugend.

Der Hinnahme Gottes in Glaube und Hoffnung folgt als besondre Tugend die völlige **aktive Hingabe an ihn in der Liebe.** Die Liebe richtet sich zunächst auf die Persönlichkeit Gottes, versenkt sich innerlich in sein Wesen und sucht mit ihm die engste Gemeinschaft. Sie ist zunächst uninteressierte, unegoistische Hingabe, erst dann ein liebevolles Eingehen auf Gottes Absichten in Gesinnung und Tat. Wie ein Mensch zunächst die Persönlichkeit des Anderen liebt, dann sich aber auch um Mitverwirklichung seiner Ziele bemüht, so trachtet auch der Mensch, der Gott liebt, dessen Absichten in der Welt durchzusetzen. Gilt Gottes Liebe allen Menschen, so ist die Grundtugend des christlichen Charakters auch **liebende Hingabe an die Menschheit.** Nachdem im Alten Testament die Liebe wesentlich auf die Volksgenossen beschränkt war und sie die ausgehende Antike in der Stoa auf die ganze Welt bezog, gab ihr das Neue Testament eine ebenso universale wie konkrete Bestimmtheit. Jeder Mensch hat ohne Rücksicht auf Geschlecht und Rasse, Stand und Beruf, Reichtum oder Armut Anspruch auf christlich Liebe. Praktisch hat sie sich denjenigen Menschen zuzuwenden, die ihr durch die geschichtliche Fügung zum Nächsten geworden sind. Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter gibt der christlichen Nächstenliebe die rechte Anweisung für ihre wirkliche Ausführung. Dem Bedürftigen, der an meinen Weg gelegt ist, habe ich zu helfen.

Zu den Besonderheiten der christlichen Nächstenliebe gehört auch die **Feindesliebe.** Sie klingt zwar auch außerhalb des Christentums einige Male an, ist aber erst bei Jesus genauer motiviert

und durchgeführt. Jesus erwartet eine Bereitschaft zur Vergebung und Hilfe auch gegenüber dem persönlichen Feinde und Verfolger. Der Sinn dieser Feindesliebe ist jedoch nicht, den Feind in seiner Bosheit zu bestärken und ihm immer neue feindselige Handlungen zu ermöglichen. Sie ist kein Ausdruck der Schwäche, sondern vielmehr einen Stärke, die nicht nur das eigene Herz, sondern auch den Gegner von seinem Haß lösen will, indem sie ihn von der Erfolglosigkeit seiner Handlungen überführt. — Die christliche Liebe richtet sich auf Seele und Leib des Nächsten. Beides kann getrennt geübt werden. Aber die Hilfe in äußerer Not wird auch die geistige Förderung mit in Betracht ziehen, allerdings nicht so, daß etwa zur Bedingung materieller Gaben ein Bekenntnis zum Christentum gemacht würde. Solches Verfahren würde nur Heuchelei großziehen. — Liebe kann jedoch nicht nur Bedürftigen, sondern auch Besitzenden bezeugt werden. Es gibt Menschen, die an einer Ueberfülle äußeren oder inneren Besitzes leiden. Ihnen tut man einen Liebesdienst, wenn man sich von ihnen beschenken läßt. Nehmen erfordert oft mehr Selbstverleugnung und darum Liebe als Geben. Alles christliche Schenken hat darum den Charakter wirklicher Güter zu tragen, die den Empfänger nicht erniedrigt und ihn auch nicht wahllos beschenkt. Echte Liebe verknüpft sich mit Weisheit, die sorgfältig die Lage des Andern untersucht und die gerade für ihn nötige Hilfe erwählt. Dazu gehört Lebensbeobachtung und ein natürlicher Takt. Christliche Liebe verlangt nicht nur ein gutes Herz, sondern auch einen klaren Verstand, sie ist nicht sentimental, sondern nüchtern.

Uebt der christliche Charakter diese Tugenden, vor allen Dingen Glaube und Liebe, so nähert er sich der **christlichen Vollkommenheit.** Die christliche Vollkommenheit ist nicht nur von einem besonderen Stand zu erreichen, sondern in jedem Beruf möglich. Sie besteht nicht in außergewöhnlichen Werken, sondern in denen, welche das Leben von jedem verlangt. Objektiv sind allerdings die Leistungen der Menschen voneinander verschieden und die einen viel größer, als die der andern. Ein Apostel hat mehr für das Christentum geleistet als ein schlichter Pfarrer, ein Staatsmann Größeres für sein Volk, als ein einfacher Beamter. Im Urteil Gottes aber leistet auch der erstere nur das, wozu er berufen ist und der letztere nicht weniger, als ihm anbefohlen ist. **Die Vollkommenheit ist ein Relationsbegriff; sie bezeichnet das rechte Verhältnis von Gabe und Leistung.** Wem viel gegeben ist, von dem wird viel verlangt; wer Weniges getreu vollführt, kann auch vollkommen werden.

Christliche Vollkommenheit besteht in dieser Welt nach einem Wort Luthers nicht im Wordensein, sondern im Werden. Darum fällt sie auch nicht negativ mit Sündlosigkeit und positiv mit ethi-

scher Vollendung zusammen. Der erste Johannesbrief stellt zwar mit Recht fest, daß niemand sündigt, der in Gott bleibt, aber auf der andern Seite gibt er auch zu erkennen, daß niemand dauernd in Gott bleibt und darum immer wieder sündigt. **Infolgedessen gehört zur christlichen Vollkommenheit, sich der dauernden Notwendigkeit der göttlichen Vergebung für das noch Unvollkommene bewußt zu bleiben. Auf der andern Seite gehört aber zur Vollkommenheit des christlichen Charakters das stete Streben und die schrittweise Annäherung an die Vollendung;** beides zusammengefaßt in dem paulinischen Bekenntnis: Nicht daß ich es schon ergriffen habe, ich jage ihm aber nach, ob ich es ergreifen möge.

# Haben wir ein Bekenntnis unsers Glaubens nötig?

Dr. C. Schieler.

(Schluß.)

Aber die Kirche darf sich nicht damit begnügen, ein Bekenntnis zu haben, ein Bekenntnis, das sie als eine christliche Kirche dokumentiert, ein Bekenntnis, welches das Evangelium Jesu Christi zum Fundament hat, sie muß das Bekenntnis auch zur Geltung bringen bei ihren Dienern und bei ihren Gliedern. Somit schließt sich hieran die Frage, wie die Kirche ihr Bekenntnis zu verwerten hat.

Vor allem kann das Bekenntnis verwertet werden in dem **Katechismus**, so daß die Kinder die Lehre ihrer Kirche von früh auf kennen lernen, sie als Leitsterne ihres Lebens in sich aufnehmen. Dies zeigt aber auch zugleich, wie unbedingt notwendig für die Jugend der Unterricht im Katechismus, insbesondre der Konfirmandenunterricht ist. Dies erkannte der große Reformator Dr. Martin Luther, der seinen Kleinen Katechismus für die Kinder schrieb, und da die Katholiken die großen Segnungen dies Büchleins für die Förderung der Reformation sahen, schrieb Petrus Canisius ein Jesuit, ebenfalls einen kleinen katholischen Katechismus; für die Reformierten wurde der Heidelberger und für die Englische Hochkirche der Westminster Katechismus verfaßt. **Der Katechismus ist das in Fragen und Antworten zerlegte Bekenntnis der Kirche.**

Das Bekenntnis soll sein eine Richtschnur, eine feste Regel, „a Standard" wie wir uns auszudrücken belieben. Und wir haben in unsrer religiös gährenden Zeit einen solchen Standard notwendig: die Laien und die Prediger, diese letzteren um das Volk, die verschiedenartig gerichteten Geister zu sammeln und zusammenzuhalten, daß sie leben und arbeiten für Gott. **„Niemand kann ein tüchtiger Prediger sein, der nicht ein Bekenntnis hat."** Nur dann können seine Worte aus dem Herzen wie aus einer lebenden Quelle kommen, nur dann kann er mit Wärme und Begeisterung predigen, nur dann kann er das Volk fortreißen zu heilsamen Entschlüssen für ein christliches Leben.

Das Bekenntnis wird verwertet im **öffentlichen Gottesdienst**, so daß die ganze Gemeinde ihren christlichen Glauben bekennt. Und das ist ein erhebender Akt im Gottesdienst, wenn die Stimmen der Kinder mit denen der Erwachsenen, wenn jung und alt, arm und reich, gelehrt und ungelehrt, feierlich sie alle sagen: „Ich glaube an Gott den Vater usw." Ja, ich bekenne, dies gemeinsame Bekenntnis ist einer der Hauptbestandteile des Gottesdienstes neben gemeinsamen Gesang, Gebet und Schriftlesung; ein reicher Segen

kommt aus diesem öffentlichen, gemeinsamen Bekenntnis des Glaubens. Zudem ist dieser Brauch ein uralter Brauch in der Kirche, stammt von der Zeit der Aposteln her. Die ersten Christen bekannten ihren Glauben, in dieser oder jener Form, dort unten, tief unter der Erde, und dann standen sie vor den heidnischen Richterstuhlen und bekannten, jeder einzelne in Wort und Tat den Christenglauben und starben dafür. Aber kein anders Glaubensbekenntnis ist so geeignet zu diesem gemeinsamen Gebrauch als das **Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis.** Deshalb haben wir es auch in unsrer Evangelischen Kirchen verwertet im Gottesdienst, bei der Taufe, bei der Konfirmation, beim heiligen Abendmahl, bei der Ordination von Predigern. So geschieht es auch in vielen christlichen Kirchen — und das ist doch noch ein **gemeinsames heiliges Band, das dieselben mit einander und dem Dreieinigen Gott verbindet,** wenn sie auch sonst weit aus einandergehen, ein Band zwischen den Katholiken und Protestanten, den Lutheranern, Reformierten und Evangelischen, den Methodisten, Baptisten, Anglikanern — und andern — die Eine Allgemeine Kirche Christi — das Reich Gottes auf Erden! Und es ist doch bei all dem Unerfreulichem auf diesem Gebiete ein erhebender Gedanke: **Die Millionen Christen auf dem Erdenrund und am Sonntag in ihren Gotteshäusern versammelt wie aus einem Mund bekennen: „Ich glaube usw." Himmel und Erde vereinigt im Bekenntnis an den Vater aller, den Erlöser aller, den Heiligmacher aller!**

## Die Verpflichtung der Bekenntnisse.

Diese wichtige Frage: verpflichten und wie verpflichten die Bekenntnisse, darf nicht übergangen werden, zumal sie in unsern Tagen wieder akut geworden ist. Bekenntnis und Evangelium müssen übereinstimmen; das Bekenntnis hat seine Wurzel im Evangelium und nur im Evangelium; das Bekenntnis ist autoritative Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift. Denn die Absicht kirchlicher Bekenntnisformen geht dahin, einen strittig gewordenen Inhalt des Evangeliums oder der Heiligen Schrift zu definieren und eine für die betreffende Gemeinschaft forthin bindende Auslegung zu liefern. Diese Auslegung soll aber nicht über, sondern unter der Schrift stehen.

Hieraus ergibt sich, daß die **Bekenntnisse verpflichten, weil sie mit der Heiligen Schrift übereinstimmen.** Es besteht die Meinung, daß ein Christ im Gewissen zwar nur an das Evangelium gebunden ist, daß er aber Glied, beziehungsweise Diener einer Kirche nur werden dürfe, wenn er in freier Ueberzeugung die Symbole derselben als dem Evangelium gemäß erkenne. Diese Theorie ist korrekt. Aber notwendig muß auch noch betont werden, daß die Bekenntnisse verpflichten **insoweit sie mit der Heiligen Schrift über-**

**einstimmen.** Dieser Satz liegt im Wesen einer evangelischen Kirchengemeinschaft begründet. Gott hat es nämlich nicht gefallen, eine irdisch-organisierte Kirche mit formeller Unfehlbarkeit auszustatten. (Die katholische Lehre von der Unfehlbarkeit der Allgemeinen Konzilien und der Person des Papstes ist gegen die Schrift und in der Geschichte dieser Kirche widerlegt.) Aber eine evangelische Kirche hat doch die Aufgabe das Evangelium fortzupflanzen und sie versteht in der Zuversicht dabei die Leitung des Heiligen Geistes zu erfahren. Deshalb kann und darf sie grundsätzlich nichts anderes tun als die Geltung ihrer Bekenntnisse auszusprechen **weil** sie im allgemeinen und **soweit** sie im besonderen mit der Schrift übereinstimmen. Das formulierte Bekenntnis ist wohl das deutlichste Symbol einer Kirche aber nicht das einzige: daneben steht die Verfassung, der Kultus, die eigentümlich geprägte Frömmigkeit und das sittliche Leben. An ihren Früchten sollt ihr sie erkennen, sagt der Heiland. Deshalb kann die Kirche auf eine **mechanische Geltendmachung des Bekenntnisbuchstabens verzichten.**

## Das apostolische Bekenntnis.

Die Bedeutung dieses Symbols erklärt die reiche Literatur welche über dasselbe entstanden ist um den Ursprung den Namen und den Gebrauch desselben festzustellen und zu verteidigen. Es ist ein **Gemeinbekenntnis aller christlichen Kirchen.** Darin liegt seine Bedeutung — bis in unsre Tage hinein. Der Name aber **„apostolisches Symbolum"** ist irreführend. Seit dem vierten Jahrhundert erst kommt die Meinung über dies Bekenntnis in der Kirche auf, daß es von den Aposteln vor ihren Wegzug von Jerusalem so verfaßt sei, daß jeder von ihnen einen Vertrag dazu gegeben, so habe durch Aufstellung einer gemeinsamen Glaubensnorm eine spätere Abneigung in der Lehre und alle Unstimmigkeiten vermieden werden sollen. Diese Ansicht ist durchaus unhaltbar, indessen wird sie in der römisch-katholischen Kirche noch festgehalten und gelehrt so gar in den Catechismus Romanus. Sie entstand durch einen falschen Schluß aus der Benennung **apostolisch.** Diese Formel ist überhaupt nicht durch eine Uebereinkunft der Apostel entstanden welche darin einen Typus ihres Glaubens aufstellten, denn weder das Neue Testament noch die Kirchengeschichte der drei ersten Jahrhunderte wissen von einem so wichtigen Vorgang.

Die Entstehung dieses Bekenntnisses dürfte am wahrscheinlichsten auf das bei der Taufe übliche Bekenntnis das der Täufling abzulegen hatte, zurückzuführen sein. Dadurch erklärt sich auch das große Ansehen das es schon sehr frühe genoß und bis noch genießt. Da Jesus die Taufe auf Gott den Vater und den Sohn und den Heiligen Geist anbefahl, so war darin die Norm für das Bekenntnis gegeben dessen **Inhalt mit vollem Recht auf die Apostel zurück-**

**geführt werden kann,** woher auch gewiß der Name „apostolisch" stammt. Die Form blieb nicht immer die gleiche, weil sie eben nicht mit voller apostolischer Autorität überliefert wurde. Aber man erkannte darin wegen der mit der Heiligen Schrift übereinstimmenden Form den Glauben der apostolischen Kirche; daher hieß dies Bekenntnis geradezu „pistis"-Glaube, „regula fidei"-**Glaubensregel.** Gerade der letztere Name schließt den Gegensatz zu abweichenden (häretischen) Meinungen in sich ein. Dies Bekenntnis wurde mit vieler Feierlichkeit den Katechumenen eingeprägt und gehörte in der ältesten Kirche zu der Arkandisziplin, also zu dem, was, wie auch die Sakramente, vor Nichtchristen geheimgehalten werden mußte. Es war auch das **Erkennungszeichen** eines Christen im Gegensatz zu Nichtchristen und Irrgläubigen und erhielt davon den Namen **Symbolum.**

Was den **Inhalt** des Bekenntnisses betrifft, so steht die trinitarische Gliederung desselben fest. Unbedingt gemeinsam ist ferner der Hinweis auf die Einzigkeit Gottes und seine Allmacht, sowie seine Bezeichnung als des Schöpfers. Christus wird als der Sohn Gottes bezeichnet, registriert wird seine Geburt aus der Jungfrau, sein Tod, seine Auferstehung, Himmelfahrt und Wiederkunft zum Gericht. Im Anschluß an das Bekenntnis zum Heiligen Geist ist ausgedrückt die Auferstehung der Toten oder des Fleisches, vereinzelt auch das ewige Leben; in manchen Formen geschieht der Kirche Erwähnung.

Bezüglich **des Alters** sei außer den obigen Ausführungen noch als Resultat der Forschungen hinzugefügt, daß dies Bekenntnis nicht plötzlich irgendwo im zweiten Jahrhundert entstanden ist, sondern in seinen Wurzeln ins erste Jahrhundert zurückreicht. Man darf nicht behaupten, daß das Bekenntnis eine aus den Schriften der Apostel gezogene Kollation sei. Seine Anfänge erwuchsen gleichzeitig mit der Sammlung der apostolischen Schriften. Nicht zu leugnen ist, daß **der Grundstock des Symbolums in formelhafter Fassung die Grundwahrheiten und Tatsachen des Evangeliums ausprägt, welches die Apostel gepredigt und in ihren Schriften niedergelegt haben.** Ein „Prediger des Evangeliums," welcher das Symbolum im Gottesdienst und bei Spendung der Sakramente und andern kirchlichen Handlungen nicht gebrauchen will, weil er den Inhalt desselben, respektive einzelne Teile desselben nicht glauben könne, erklärt damit, daß **er dadurch nicht mehr auf dem Boden des Evangeliums steht, da alle und jede einzelne Wahrheit des Bekenntnisses im Evangelium enthalten ist,** wozu ihm der Katechismus mit den angezogen Schriftstellen bei jeder einzelnen Wahrheit den klarsten Beweis liefert. Wir dürfen erklären: das apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis ist **als „die Artikel unsers allgemeinen christlichen Glaubens" zu schätzen.** Man darf aus vorstehenden Bemer-

kungen nicht den Schluß ziehen als wolle man „die Freiheit der Forschung“ aufheben oder beschränken. Diese wollen wir in Ehren halten. Aber wenn es sich um die Grundwahrheiten des Christentums, um die klarst ausgesprochenen Wahrheiten des Evangeliums handelt, muß ein evangelischer Prediger, mag er Professor oder Pastor sein, einerlei, wie der einfachsten evangelische Christ demütig sagen und bekennen: „Ich glaube.“

Und damit ist wahrlich kein Opfer des Verstandes gebracht, wohl aber ein Opfer der Eitelkeit; denn etwas, was menschlichem logisch richtigem Denken **widerspricht**, zu glauben wird nicht von uns verlangt, wohl aber manches, was unser Denken übersteigt. Alle die großen Geister und kühnsten Denker der Christenheit haben in Demut sich gebeugt vor dem himmlischen Geistesstrahl, der in der Offenbarung unser Wissen bereichert, haben, je mehr sie darüber nachgedacht, desto mehr ihre Bewunderung ausgedrückt. Nur kleine, eitle Geister haben sich gegen diese oder jene Wahrheit des Symbolums aufgelehnt, haben als Irrlichter einige Zeit geleuchtet, andre irregeführt und sind dann verschwunden. Die Freiheit des Gewissens, welche unsre Kirche hochhält, muß stets in Geltung bleiben; aber diese Freiheit hat doch wie jede menschliche Freiheit ihre Schranken; sonst artet sie aus in Willkür. Und wo diese Schranke liegt, besagt doch der zweite Artikel unsrer Konstitution „Bekenntnis“ recht deutlich.

Gehen wir zum Schluß näher darauf ein, weshalb manche sich weigern, mit den Worten des apostolischen Bekenntnisses ihren Glauben zu bekennen, natürlich soweit der Raum es gestattet. Worin besteht das Wesentliche dieses Bekenntnisses? „Ich glaube an Gott den Vater, allmächtigen Schöpfer Himmels und der Erde.“ Das geben alle Christen zu. „Ich glaube an Jesum Christum seinen eingebornen Sohn, unsern Herrn.“ Niemand widerspricht. „Ich glaube an den Heiligen Geist.“ Alle stimmen zu. „Ich glaube an die eine, allgemeine, christliche Kirche.“ Keine Einwendung. „Ich glaube an die Gemeinschaft der Heiligen.“ Allgemeine Zustimmung. „Ich glaube an die Vergebung der Sünden.“ Niemand stellt sie in Frage. „Ich glaube an ein ewiges Leben.“ Kein Widerspruch. Dies sind die sieben großen wesentlichen affirmativen Bestandteile des Bekenntnisses und ich frage: wenn jemand diese gläubig annimmt, warum will er sich weigern das Bekenntnis zu sprechen? Ich kann keinen Grund finden, weshalb er sich weigern kann. Aber es gibt zwei Dinge, an welchem gewisse Leute Anstoß nehmen, Dinge, welche im Bekenntnis ausgedrückt sind, und sie sagen, weil sie dies nicht glauben könnten, könnten sie das Bekenntnis nicht sprechen. Vor allem nimmt man Anstoß an den Worten: **„Empfangen vom Heiligen Geist, geboren aus der Jungfrau Maria.“** Nun ist die Frage: Ist dies die Lehre der Heiligen Schrift? Oder

lehrt dieselbe, daß Jesus der Sohn Josephs sei? Mit nichten. Wäre Jesus der Sohn Josephs, wie könnte er dann der Sohn Gottes sein? Er wäre dann der Sohn eines Menschen. Das Alte und Neue Testament bezeugen Jesum als den Sohn Gottes, den eingebornen Sohn Gottes, den wahrhaftigen Sohn Gottes, nicht etwa in jenem vagen Sinn, wie rationalistisch gefärbte moderne Theologen ihn noch gelten lassen wollen. **„Ich und der Vater sind eins,"** erklärt Jesus feierlich; „wer mich sieht, sieht auch den Vater" usw. Dies „empfangen vom Heiligen Geist" ist ein Geheimnis unsers christlichen Glaubens. Das „daß" können wir begreifen, das „wie" können wir nicht ergründen; es bleibt ein Geheimnis der Gottheit. Und hier wie sonst gilt Jesu Forderung: **„Glauben!"**

Nun erklärt Dr. Jefferson, dessen höchst sonderbare Lehre über die Jungfrau-Geburt Jesu wir in einem früheren Artikel beleuchtet haben: „Ich glaube an die übernatürliche Geburt Jesu und deshalb habe ich keine Schwierigkeit diese Worte (des Bekenntnisses) zu sagen." (Und er stimmt doch jenen Schrifterklärern zu, die in Joseph den wirklichen Vater Jesu erkennen!) „Aber auch," so fährt er fort, „wenn ich ein Agnostiker in Bezug auf die übernatürliche Geburt Jesu wäre, würde ich doch perfectly free jene Worte sagen können und würde die Andeutung, ich wäre unehrlich und spielte mit Worten übel aufnehmen." Und er meint, die Worte: ich glaube an die übernatürliche Geburt Jesu, seien im zweiten Jahrhundert so verstanden worden und nahezu alle Christen hätten sie so verstanden. „Wir alle glauben, daß Jesus sündenlos war. Aber wann wurde er sündlos — als er dreißig Jahre, oder zwölf Jahre, oder als er sechs, oder als er ein Jahr alt war? War er heilig in der Stunde seiner Geburt? Es ist vernünftig, glaube ich, wenn wir glauben, daß er heilig war von Anfang an. Er war frei von der Befleckung der Sünde von dem Augenblick seiner Empfängnis an. . . . . Er wurde in Heiligkeit empfangen. Es ist zweifelsohne wahr, daß, wie Lukas sagt, ‚der Heilige Geist über sie (Maria) kam' und ‚daß die Kraft des Allerhöchsten sie (Maria) überschattete.' Wir können dies alles glauben und es ist auch obgleich Joseph sein (Jesu) Vater dem Fleisch nach war, möglich zu glauben, daß der Allmächtige infused into Jesus' being in the instant of His conception, the very holiness of heaven, in which case why should we hesitate to say He ‚was conceived by the Holy Ghost,' the Spirit of Holiness—the Spirit of God?"

Und was den Ausdruck „die Jungfrau Maria" betrifft, findet Jefferson keine Schwierigkeit. Sie wird sogenannt im Unterschied von den andern Marias, die in unserm Neuen Testament erwähnt werden. Sie sei einfach als die Jungfrau Maria bekannt worden. „Und so, wenn ich das Bekenntnis spreche, auch wenn ich ein Agnostiker hinsichtlich der übernatürlichen Geburt Jesu wäre, so könnte

ich doch sagen, daß er von der ‚Jungfrau Maria' geboren worden wäre. Er wurde geboren von dem Weib, das in der Geschichte als die ‚Jungfrau Maria' bekannt war."

Auf diese Weise sucht dieser Mann seinen Glauben und seine Berechtigung, die Worte des Bekenntnisses, wie es seine Denomination fordert, zu sprechen. Ist dies zu loben? Man sucht sich eben abzufinden und zu rechtfertigen vor der Gemeinde.

Der zweite Satz im Glaubensbekenntnis, an welchem Anstoß genommen wird ist: **„Ich glaube an die Auferstehung des Leibes."** Diese Leute wollen nicht, wie sie sagen, glauben, daß unser physische Leib je aus dem Grab kommen werde und deshalb könnten sie nicht das Bekenntnis sprechen. Hierauf diene zur Antwort, daß wir als Protestanten bei der Erklärung eines Glaubensbekenntnisses gebunden sind an die Lehre der Heiligen Schrift. Ein Bekenntnis steht nicht über der Schrift. Das Neue Testament lehrt aber deutlichst die Auferstehung der Toten und damit kann doch nur die Auferstehung unsers Leibes gemeint sein. Unser Heiland läßt uns hierüber durch seine klaren Aussprüche keinen Augenblick im Zweifel: Unsre toten Leiber werden wieder auferstehen zu neuem Leben. Dann behandelt sein großer Schüler und Apostel Paulus diese Frage der Auferstehung ausführlich in dem bekannten 15. Kapitel des ersten Korintherbriefes. Er erklärt, daß nicht dieselbe Art des Leibes, den wir in das Grab gelegt, aus demselben wieder hervorkommen werde. „Es wird wohl gesäet ein **natürlicher Leib** und wird auferstehen **ein geistlicher Leib.** Ist ein natürlicher Leib, so ist auch ein geistlicher Leib." (Vers 44). Dieser geistliche Leib wird auferstehen oder unser natürlicher Leib, der vorerst vergehen muß, ehe neues Leben in ihn kommt, wird als ein geistlicher Leib auferstehen. Wohl lautet eine alte Uebersetzung: Ich glaube an die Auferstehung des „Fleisches." Aber da ist nur gemeint der niedere, fleischliche Teil des Menschen, gegenüber dem höheren Teil, der unsterblichen Seele. So heißt es ja auch: „Das Wort ist Fleisch geworden." — Somit kann dieser Satz des Glaubensbekenntnisses keinen stichhaltigen Grund abgeben, dasselbe nicht zu gebrauchen.

Dieses Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis war von sehr großer Bedeutung für das Leben der Kirche im allgemeinen und das Leben der einzelnen Christen im besonderen. Es ist aus dem Dunkel der Katakomben emporgestiegen an das helle Licht des Tages. Es war der feste Stab für unzählige Christen, die Leben, Gut und Blut, alles hingaben für ihren heiligen Christenglauben. Es hat seine Bedeutung behalten in jenen Jahrhunderten, wo die Heilige Schrift verkannt, vernachläßigt, vergessen war unter dem düsteren Haufen von sogenannten Ueberlieferungen. Und gerade jetzt, in dieser Zeit religiöser Gährung, wo man wieder stürmt in Schrift und Wort gegen dieses altehrwürdige Bekenntnis, ist es von höchster

Bedeutung. **Es ist die Glorie dieses Bekenntnisses, daß es Jesum unserm Herrn die gebührende Bedeutung gibt. Darum laßt uns treu und unwandelbar stehen zu diesem Bekenntnis unsers christlichen Glaubens!**

# EDITORIALS

## THE CROSS

Years ago we were crossing the Atlantic Ocean. On the Sunday after Ascension day I had preached in the dining room to a congregation of Protestants, Catholics and Jews. After the service a young Hebrew woman asked me, "Why did you say in your sermon that the Jews crucified Jesus?" I was much surprised at this question and told her so. I tried to show her that it was an historic fact, attested to by the biblical record and accepted by every one. But she dissented. Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilate, and if a Jewish rabble in the capital had exerted pressure on the governor, the murder of Jesus could not anymore be charged to the whole Jewish people than the lynching of a Negro perpetrated by a Texas mob could be charged to the American people. And aside from the historical aspect, she continued, to keep on preaching that today was keeping the fires of anti-Jewish hatred alive. The first charge Jew-baiters in Russia always threw in the teeth of their Hebrew victims, was: The Jews crucified Christ!

I told her that such feelings and attitudes were entirely foreign to the minds of Christian preachers. The Jews of Jesus' time were only the representatives of the human race. Their sin was humanity's sin and Jesus' death and suffering had cosmic significance. The lady had never heard such an interpretation and I failed to convince her.

To this day the claim that the Jews crucified Jesus is the sore spot in the feelings of the rabbis. They may take a friendly attitude towards Jesus, they may say his ethical teaching was exalted and his personality charming. They will be perfectly willing to admit that he was a true son of Israel. They proudly state that he was only the perpetuator of the preaching of the prophets and that all he said could be duplicated from the writings of his Jewish contemporaries. They are ready to take all the credit for his being what he was; but they will take no responsibility for his crucifixion.

The cross has ever been a stumbling block to the Jew. But how about the Gentile, or the Christian? The apostle said, it was foolishness to the Greek. In one way or the other it has always been a puzzle to the human mind. It was impossible to ignore it

for apostolic teaching and the faith of the church had made it central. Still, might not too much emphasis on the Lord's tragic death have thrown Christian teaching out of balance? If so, then Paul himself was the main offender. To say, as he did, that he determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, sounds like a decided over-statement. It can even be shown that he cared little for the facts of Jesus' life and that he hardly ever quotes from his teachings. All of his apostolic gospel culminates in the death and resurrection of Christ. Faith in these brings about the mystical union with Christ whereby we die to sin and live in him. The church in her creeds has followed in the apostle's footsteps. The second article says nothing about Jesus' life; from his birth it at once leaps to the end, to his sufferings and death.

Therefore, years ago, the cry was heard: Away from Paul, back to Christ! Christ's sufferings and death were only the highest manifestation of his faith in God and love to man. Like a martyr he sealed his teachings with his blood. What he had taught he practised and he would rather die than yield.

Surely Christ's death meant that, but not that only. The death of the martyr is glorious and inspiring. But Christ's death had *cosmic* meaning.. In him and his death God reconciled the *world* unto himself. He gave his only begotten son to prove his love for the *world*. The apostle of the Gentiles has expressed this cosmic significance of the death of Christ in his teaching of the "second Adam" (in Romans V). The first Adam sinned and his sinful nature was handed on to his progeny. He is, therefore, their ancestor and head not only physically but also morally. Everyone who is descended from him by blood relationship also shares with him his sinful propensities. Christ is the second Adam, the beginner and head of a new race. He was sent into the world for this purpose, his birth was an incarnation of the divine redemptive thought. In a perfectly human development—made possible by the laying aside (kenosis) of the divine prerogative—he reached perfection by suffering, the perfection of obedience unto death. His triumph was the triumph of faith and love. Therefore it was impossible that death should hold him. Faith is the spiritual bond which unites the members of this new race to the head.

With this message of the reconciliation of the world to God, in Christ, the apostles went out on their mission. Those who accepted it were "saved". The process of sanctification followed, but they were saved while still sinners. Christ's death and resurrection were the guarantee to them that they now had fellowship with God and that grace would continue the work of renewal. Today many claim that one can be sure of salvation only when the fruits

of life are convincingly real. In that case certitude will never come.

This cosmic significance of Christ's person and work adds to the individual gospel its social and universal sweep. If he is the world redeemer then the cross is world wide in its appeal, the Ethiopian finds that the new revelation is for him as well as for the Roman and the Greek. We haven't solved the race problem yet. We haven't learned yet to practise true internationalism. We have not saturated our civilization with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, as yet. But that only the application of the spirit of Christ, the crucified and risen one, will give motor power, courage and persistence enough to bring us approximately nearer to the goal of world redemption and peace, is the teaching of the past and the hope of the future.

## THEY WERE GOOD HATERS

Some time ago I attended service at a Presbyterian church. When we came to the responsive reading of passages from the psalms, I noticed, in looking ahead, that that terrible verse from the 137th psalm was part of the portion for that evening's devotion. "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones". I said to myself, they can't read that—but they read it, no comment was made, no objection raised. Of course, not one in the audience could have endorsed what he was reading; but it was part of "selection number so and so," so it had to be recited. The incident started quite a train of thought in my mind.

The old Hebrews whose Holy City was destroyed by the Babylonians and who now by the rivers of Babylon consumed their souls in yearning after Jerusalem, meant what they said: they hated the enemy with a bitter hatred, and if some one had treated the enemys' children as their own children had been treated, they would have called him blessed. And not only were the Hebrews good haters, the Christians of subsequent ages were no better. When Godfrey of Boullion captured the Holy City from the Moslems, the crusaders dashed the brains of many children out against the stones and then Godfrey took possession of the city in the name of him who had been crucified there. He had no sense of incongruity when he engaged in wholesale murder for him who said, "love your enemies!"

"Religion, what crimes have been committed in thy name!" When the imperial General Tilly had conquered the heretical city of Magdeburg in 1631, he gave it over to the murderous instincts of his soldiery for three days. They indulged in every vice and crime, regardless of age or sex.

Of course, that was a great while ago, and the Presbyterians of that church, while reciting that wicked verse, had no murderous thoughts at all. Why, then, did they include such a verse in their evening devotions? Why did they repeat a prayer so horribly at variance with their moral sense?

Simply because it was part of a psalm and the psalms were part of the Word of God. Is not all scripture given by inspiration of God, profitable for doctrine, for proof, for correction . . . . (2 Tim. 3: 16)? We know to what unbelievable iniquities a literal conception of such a statement has led. In Exodus 22: 18 it says: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." It has often been pointed out that this verse has lighted the pyres on which thousands of unfortunate women died a horrible death. The "wars of Jehovah" in the Old Testament kindled the warlike spirit of Cromwell's soldiers. Even as Joshua was said to have put whole cities of Canaanites to the sword at the command of the Lord, so felt Christian Joshuas themselves empowered to exterminate their enemies root and branch. How divinely commissioned did Allied and American armies feel to send the modern "Huns" to hell, "from whence they came"!

And even where time and culture had softened the spirit of crude barbarism, there have been "good haters" even in modern times. Professor H. Cremer of Greifswald was one of my best beloved and most revered theological teachers. He was a man of firm principles and stern spirit. He hated the theologians who twisted the Word according to their own notions and would often remark that the church must learn again to pray "the psalms of revenge" against the modern destroyers of orthodoxy. Of course, one would concede to him that wrong doctrine must be fought, but his way of putting it seemed to be cast in Old Testament mold.

Remember the incident in Jesus' life where a Samaritan city did not want to receive him and John and James asked, "Shall we call fire down upon them, even as Elijah did?" Jesus said, "No, wist ye not the children of what spirit you are?" The disciples cited the bible and an authority of the greatest rank. But the master tells them to judge even the Old Testament in accordance with the Christian spirit which he had communicated to them.

Christian discernment must lead us in the understanding and application of the word of God. Doctrines that are in contradiction to the belief in a just and loving God as revealed by Christ—as e.g. that of eternal hell fire—belong in the same category as the fires of Elijah, they need no longer terrify the children of the new spirit.

The Mormons justified their polygamy by reference to the

many wives of Old Testament saints and the Seventh Day Adventists abstain from pork because it was prohibited in the Old Testament. The stricter sort of Lutherans refuse to fellowship with any kind of Christians who differ from them in the interpretation of scripture teaching. How are we ever to arrive at Christian unity unless we learn that the letter killeth and the spirit maketh alive?

## „Und die Angeln waren von Gold."

Kürzlich waren wir in einer Kirche, die die Auszeichnung besitzt, die schönste protestantische Kirche der Stadt zu sein. Sie gehört den Presbyterianern, und ihr Mitgliederkreis ist daher zusammengesetzt aus Leuten, denen es nicht an Gold fehlt. Es heißt, daß sich unter ihnen dreizehn Millionäre befinden. Aber nicht nur Geld ist hier vertreten, auch Bildung und Geschmack. In der Nähe von bekannten höheren Bildungsanstalten gelegen, ist die Kirche die geistliche Zufluchtsstätte von zahlreichen Collegeschülern und besonders -schülerinnen. In der Erbauung des Gotteshauses konnten sich also guter Geschmack und hinlängliche Geldmittel die Hände reichen. In Folge dessen hat der Baumeister ein prächtiges Monument der englischen Gothik geschaffen, das an weihevoller Schönheit seines gleichen sucht. George W. Fiske von Oberlin nennt es in seinem „Recovery of Worship" (siehe Book Review, Seite 153) unter den Kirchen, welche durch Bau und Ausstattung dem Charakter der Gebetsstätte am nächsten kommen.

Wir hatten gerade dies Buch gelesen, in welchem Verfasser so warm auftritt für die Notwendigkeit, unsre Gotteshäuser zu Stätten der Anbetung Gottes zu machen. Der Altar müsse im Zentrum des Gottesdienstes stehen, nicht die Kanzel. Gemeinde und Pastor müßten zusammen an der großen Aufgabe arbeiten, am Sonntag in der Kirche die Gegenwart Gottes den Kirchgängern sichtbar und wirksam zu machen. Dieser Aufgabe müßten alles Beten, Lesen, Singen und Predigen dienen. Das Buch ist mit viel Ernst, Sachkenntnis und Ueberzeugung geschrieben und hatte auf uns nicht geringen Eindruck gemacht. So begaben wir uns also auf die lange Reise in die Kirche, um die Probe auf das Exempel zu machen.

Wir fanden den weiten, herrlichen Raum wohl gefüllt mit einer andächtigen Gemeinde. Da war kein Geschwätz oder auch nur Geflüster zu bemerken. Die Liturgie war wohl ausgestaltet. Es wurde viel gebetet (kurze, gedruckte Gebete). Der Chor sang prächtig und die Gemeinde ließ es auch am Singen nicht fehlen. Beim Darbringen des Opfers stand die ganze Gemeinde auf und sang die Doxologie. Mit einem Wort: das Element der Andacht war vorhanden, und wenn man aufsah, erlabte man sich an der Kunstsprache der Fenster.

Und dennoch warteten wir auf die Predigt. Wenn nur die unsrer Erwartung entspricht und der Erwartung so vieler Hunderte, so dachten wir. Der Prediger geht auf die Kanzel. Er schlägt die Bibel auf und findet in dem ersten Buch der Chronika seinen Text: „Und die Angeln des Hauses (Tempels) und des Allerheiligen waren von Gold." Er fand es sehr bedeutsam, daß in dem Hause Gottes selbst so unbedeutende Teile wie die Angeln (englisch „hinges") aus so kostbarem Material hergestellt sein mußten. Er wendete dies auf das christliche Leben an. Es gäbe da auch Dinge, die auf den ersten Blick unwichtig scheinen möchten, die aber doch von großem Wert seien. Er nannte in erster Linie die Höflichket („curtesy"), das Erkennungszeichen des „Christian Gentleman"; dann die Rücksicht; dann besonders die Fröhlichkeit und als ein Element derselben den Humor. Jesus habe besonders viel Humor gehabt, darum sei er so oft zum festlichen Mahl geladen worden. Ohne seinen Humor wäre er nicht ein solch populärer „diner out" gewesen. Also Jesus war so gern gesehen bei Banketten, weil er so gute Witze machen und humoristische Geschichten erzählen konnte.

Als wir das gehört hatten, waren wir am Ende unsrer Fassungskraft. Wir waren enttäuscht. Kirche und Altar und Liturgie waren alle da und waren schön. Aber die Predigt enttäuschte uns, und wir fühlten, daß wir zu denen gehörten, denen die Predigt die Hauptsache ist. Das nächste Mal werden wir zu einem Mann gehen, der über etwas anders predigt als die „hinges" des alten Tempels.

## „Und wenn sie gleich alt werden . . . ."

Das Altwerden war schon unsern Vorfahren ein ebenso unangenehmer wie unabwendbarer Prozeß. Noch hatte die strenge Wissenschaft nicht alle Gebiete des Lebens in ihre Zucht und unter ihre Herrschaft genommen. Die üppig wuchernde Phantasie bemächtigte sich auch dieses Problems. Sie träumte von einem Jungbrunnen, der die Kraft haben sollte, den Alternden die Jugend wiederzugeben. In den Büchern der Kulturgeschichte finden wir Bilder dieses Wunderbrunnens. Auf der einen Seite steigen alte Männer und Frauen in seine Fluten. Auf der andern Seite kommen sie hervor mit den Reizen und Formen der Jugendlichkeit. Auch wurde gefabelt von einem Lebenselixir. Die Alchemisten jener Tage mühten sich ab, einen Trank zusammenzubrauen, der dem Genießenden die Frische und Schwungkraft der Jugend wiedergeben sollte.

Natürlich der denkende Teil der Menschheit hatte von jeher eine bessere Einsicht in die Gesetze des Lebens gehabt. Im Novem-

berhaft von 1930 besprachen wir Ciceros Schrift De Senectute. Der Weg zu einem glücklichen Alter, sagte er, ist eine wohlverlebte Jugend. Ein nützliches Leben und ein fester Charakter verbürgen ein friedliches Greisenalter. Die Freude an der Natur und an der Einfachheit des Landlebens sind wichtige Faktoren. Auch der Glaube an ein Jenseits und eine Gemeinschaft mit den Geistern der Großen daselbst wird von ihm in Rechnung gestellt.

Auch unsre Zeit arbeitet angestrengt an dem Problem der Ueberwindung der Altersbeschwerden. Vielfach wird der Menschheit eine stark gesteigerte Lebensdauer in Aussicht gestellt. Andre laden uns ein, neue Methoden der Leibespflege zu versuchen. Vor einigen Jahren war hier in Cleveland eine Miß Blair, 63 Jahre alt, die versprach durch geeignete Leibesübungen uns die Geschmeidigkeit und Spannkraft der Jugend wiederzugeben. Sie selbst hatte das Aussehen und die Gewandtheit einer jungen Frau. Der Schreiber dieses wandte ihre Methode an. Er zog sich dabei einen Schaden zu, der ihn kürzlich genötigt hat, sich einer Operation zu unterziehen und auf einige Wochen wieder seine Zuflucht zu unserm Hospital zu nehmen. Damit wollen wir nicht sagen, daß Leibesübungen, nicht eine gute Sache sind. Im Gegenteil, die moderne Betonung des „sana mens **in corpore sano**" ist ein Schritt in der rechten Richtung, besonders da das Automobil uns das Gehen ganz abgewöhnt.

Doch von alledem sagt unser Text gar nichts. Der Psalmist ist auch alt geworden, und er weiß, daß andre alt werden. Auch er weiß, daß man gerne jung bleiben möchte. Aber er sagt nichts von Leibesübungen; er weist uns nicht an, wie man Adernverkalkung abwenden soll. Er redet nicht vom Landleben oder von Naturfreude; auch nicht einmal von geistigen Interessen. Ihm ist der religiöse Glaube die einzige Garantie der ewigen Jugend. Wie die Schrift Alten und Neuen Testamentes, über Mittelursachen hinwegsehend, in Gott allein den Ursprung und Bestand der Welt gesichert sieht, so ist das „Wohnen im Hause Gottes" die alleinige Bürgschaft für das ewig junge Herz. Gott ist die Quelle des Lebens, und wer aus ihr schöpft, bleibt frisch und fruchtbar.

Beachten wir, daß es heißt „im Hause des Herrn." Es ist die Stätte der gemeinsamen Anbetung. Nicht das einsame Sichversenken des Mystikers in das Meer des Göttlichen schwebt ihm vor, sondern die Gliedschaft in der Gemeinde derer, die an Gott glauben, den Gott, der sich geoffenbart in der Geschichte seines Volkes, wie im Leben der Welt und im Walten der Natur. Das Alter hat die Neigung, sich abzuschließen und so den Zusammenhang mit dem Leben zu verlieren, sich mit dem Alten zu begnügen und von dem Neuen sich fern zu halten. Das ist nicht das Verfahren, das der Psalmist im Auge hat. Mit dem lebendigen Gott und seiner

Gemeinde in Lebensgemeinschaft zu bleiben, das ist der Weg zu steter Geistesfrische und fruchttreibendem Wachstum. Hier hat man Zugang zu immer neuer Erfahrung der Gottesnähe und darum einer stetig quellenden Dankbarkeit. Wer so lebt, hat auch im Alter das dankbar frohe Herz. Und wenn das Herz jung bleibt, wer wollte sich nicht zufrieden geben?

# The Christian World

## Rev. John Haynes Holmes on Russia

The largest gathering in years at a meeting of the Universalist ministers of Boston assembled at the Church of the Redemption, Boston, Monday, January 4, to hear Rev. John Haynes Holmes, D.D., of New York, talk upon Soviet Russia. The Unitarian and Congregational ministers of Greater Boston were guests of the Universalists. Every seat in the chapel was taken and many had to stand. Rev. Ulysses S. Milburn, D.D., president, presided, and Rev. Abbot Peterson of the First Parish Church (Unitarian), Brookline, conducted the devotional services.

Rev. William Ware Locke of Groveland announced that the Congregational and Universalist ministers of Greater Boston would be the guests of the Unitarians at 25 Beacon St., at 2 P. M. February 8, to hear Professor Carver of Harvard University.

Rev. George Lyman Paine, president of the Boston Federation of Churches, announced a great public mass meeting in the interest of disarmament on January 31, the same day that similar mass meetings will be held in London and Washington, to be attended by high officials.

Dr. Holmes was in fine fettle, in spite of the fact that he faced two other large meetings on Monday in Boston, and the fatigue following large Sunday meetings. He spoke in part as follows:

"I was in Russia first in 1922. At that time, everything was more or less disorganized. Hangings were going on. It was a spectacle of a society gone to pieces. Everybody walked around more or less in a daze. No man could have predicted the great things that were going to happen.

"I visited Russia again in 1931, after an absence of nine years. In the outward aspect of things there had been no great changes, the buildings looked the same, the cities looked the same. On the psychic side there was no comparison between the Russia of 1922 and the Russia of 1931. In 1922 no one knew where he was going. In 1931 everybody knew. In Russia today every one is living in the future. They are living hard; sacrificing for a better *regime*.

"Russia is a country that has a future. Sometimes I think that Russia is the only country with a future. This morning I want to emphasize one fact. Russia is here and Russia is going to stay here. Russia has the oldest government in continental Europe. Every other government has changed, but Russia has the government that came into existence in the revolution of October, 1917.

"I have not imagination enough to conceive of the changes that are coming to this world. One thing to me is entirely sure—Mussolini

is going, Germany will smash up in February or March, Great Britain is going to pieces, but Russia is standing like a rock.

"Russia has one of the most powerful military machines in the world. Short of the military machine of France, there is no army in Europe to match the Red Army of Russia. Russia has established a solid economic system. In 1922 nobody knew where they were going to get food. The railroads were broken down, the food storehouses were empty. The situation was so bad that Lenin abandoned the communist plan. He surrendered to capitalism. He accepted the system of private trade on the basis of private capital late in 1921. I saw the system in full operation in 1922. There was no other way of keeping the people alive except by private trade. When the embargo was raised, private traders flocked over the border on all sides. All that is ancient history now. They have a solid economic system, a tremendous export trade—and this is a great factor in Western depression. The people do not have all the food that they want, but they have all the food they need to keep them efficient. All the food that can be saved is saved to buy machinery in the West. In the short period of ten years, they have succeeded in organizing an economic system. They have outlawed poverty on the one side and unemployment on the other side.

"Ten years ago there was a question as to whether the Soviet had popular support. The government held its power by force of arms. It was a tyranny. The tyranny still exists. Russia is one of the most powerful autocracies that the world has ever seen, but there is no question today about its having the support of the people. Ninety per cent of the people are for it. They believe in it not simply because it is powerful, but because it is beneficent. The people of sixty or sixty-five, trained in another *regime*, may not favor it, but they are dying rapidly. For 90 per cent of the people, the new system is a joyous experience. For 10 per cent it is hell. The significant thing is that the young people are enthusiastically behind the government. In fifteen or twenty years these young people will be the masses.

"There is one reservation in what I say. It relates to the peasants. In our visit to Russia, we went out on the farms and talked with the peasants as well as with the industrial workers of the cities. The government does not get the same popular support from the peasants that it gets from the industrial workers, but the difference is one of degree and not of kind. What the peasants dislike is collectivization. The Russian peasant is one of the most selfish, self-centered individualists in the world.

"When we talked to the peasants, we found criticism of the government that was bitterly expressed. We had to smile cynically when we thought of the people in this country who say there is no free speech in Russia. The peasant loves his little farm. He wants to live in his own way. The government comes along, backed by the power of the Red Army, and takes his property and collectivizes it.

"When, however, we presented to the peasant the question as to whether he would prefer the Soviet Government to going back to the government of the Czar there was only one answer—he prefers the

present *regime*. The peasant is intelligent enough to see that there is no alternative to sovietism except czarism. It is easy to observe that among the peasants, as among all other classes, there will be practical unanimity for the government in ten years.

"Russia is here, and here to stay. The Government of the United States does not know it. That is a joke to anybody who goes to Russia and sees that colossal thing which has come into existence.

"Now for the future. We consider it first as to the relations of Russia to the rest of the world, and second as to the indirect influences of Russia because of what goes on inside of the country.

"Will there be a war to the death between the communist state in the East and the capitalist state in the West? On the Russian side there is the fact that the Russian people are absolutely convinced that a capitalistic war for the destruction of Soviet Russia is just around the corner. They think of the rest as already marshaling arms for the destruction of their country. We tried to convince the Russians with whom we talked; we said, 'Don't you think that the nations of the world have troubles enough of their own?' but we made no progress. The masses live in a world of fear, not in a world of fact. Their dogma says that the capitalistic nations will unite to destroy communism, and what their dogma says must be true. In one month, six months, one year, at the most two years, the war must come. That is why they are so excited about completing the five year plan. On any other theory it would be ridiculous to try to do all of the building of new Russia in five years. It becomes understandable when you see that behind the drive to make Russia absolutely self-supporting by 1933, or even 1932, is a terror of war. The picture they have is of Russia so self-supporting that they could, ringed about with enemies, maintain themselves for a hundred years against a siege. We failed 100 per cent to make any impression on the Russian mind. They are sure we want to destroy them.

"In our part of the world we have the feeling that Russia is a great peril to us. In Germany and in France you find the same attitude. We think of the Red hordes as sweeping down upon us. On both sides of the frontier you have the fear of war. From our knowledge of psychology we realize that we have here the making of one of the most terrible wars in human history. As I tried to convince the Russians, so I try to convince every audience to which I speak in the United States, that there is no possibility, at least for a full generation, of the Russians provoking war. There is no possibility of a Red menace.

"One of the most interesting pieces of history in modern times is related to my deep conviction that Russia has no intention of making war on the world. There has been a tremendous change in the Russian international policy through the conquest of Trotsky by Stalin. Trotsky stood for a foreign policy in terms of international communism. Stalin stands for a foreign policy in terms of national communism. Trotsky held the concept of an international communism based on the theory that communism can not survive in a capitalistic world.

Communism must completely destroy capitalism, and destroy it as speedily as possible. When the policy of international communism was at the front in Russia, there was an attempt to destroy capitalism. It was a feeble attempt, but nevertheless it was an attempt. Every group in foreign counries for the spread of communism went out of existence when Stalin took power and Trotsky fell. All that is left of the old system is the astonishing fact that a soldier in the Red Army of Russia does not take oath to support his country. He is the only soldier in the world who does not take such an oath. He takes the oath of allegiance to the proletarians of the world. Lenin was one of the greatest statesmen of all times and was followed by Stalin, one of the greatest statesmen of our time. What Stalin says is this: 'Russia does not need to worry about capitalism. Capitalism does not have to be destroyed. Let Russia draw in upon herself and concentrate upon her own affairs and all will be well.' Stalin felt sure that the communistic state can live and grow powerful in a capitalistic world. The question that he put to his associates was this: 'What is the use of arguing about whether communism can survive in a capitalistic world when it is surviving?' That is, he is a realist. He says that Russia is not only surviving but growing in power.

"Then Stalin presented a second proposition to his associates. It was this: 'We do not want to destroy capitalism. We need capitalism to feed on. Where are we going to get our machinery? Where are we going to get trained engineers? Where are we to sell our goods? Let us keep the old cow (capitalism) well, let us milk her dry. If she shows any signs of illness, let us come to her help.'

"Then Stalin cynicaly added another proposition. He said: "The Soviet Government does not need to worry about destroying capitalism, for capitalism will take care of that itself. In it are the seeds of its own dissolution. Our program is to keep capitalism alive long enough to satisfy our needs, and that is our most terrible job.'

"One of the greatest stabilizing influences in Germany today is the Communist Party. It is not that they love Bruening, but they do not want a revolution because of the great tide of things, goods and men, that they are pouring into Russia today. In my visit to Russia and in my visit to Germany, I became convinced that the Communist Party in Germany is under orders from Russia to hold up the Bruening Government.

"Have you not wondered why Russia is not doing something about the situation in Manchuria? The policy of Russia in Manchuria is the policy of the pacifist. It is not because Russia is not involved—she is terribly involved—but she does not propose, at this juncture, to go to war with any government for any reason, and so will pay any price almost to keep out of it.

"When you look far enough into the future and see a Russia that has her own engineers and her own machinery, when you can envisage a time when Russia has milked the cow dry, there may be a change in that policy. No man can say. As I look ahead forty or fifty years or so, I see three great powers controlling the world—America, the last

refuge of capitalism, Russia, the embodiment of a tremendous communism, and Japan, the Eastern embodiment of Western imperialism.

"Of the indirect influence of Russia by going ahead with their own affairs I have time to say only a word. I am not a communist, but, looking out at things from the standpoint of an impartial discoverer, I see that the spectacle in Russia today is one of the most thrilling things in human history. A new system has been established, from which there has been swept clean every vestige of the concept of private property. Our civilization is absolutely dominated by the concept of private property. Whenever the real test comes in our civilization, we never hesitate to sacrifice man to property. You and I do not live or think or do anything except around that concept. In Russia, the highest ambition of the young people is to qualify for membership in the communist party. When one enters it, the organization takes him over. He goes where he is ordered to go and he does what he is ordered to do. In this Russia there is no wealth and there is no poverty. The only one who does not have a card guaranteed him for food is the priest. He still lives on the bounty of others, but for every other man subsistence is guaranteed. I doubt not that there are hundreds of those in this country who would be glad today to exchange their present status for a status where livelihood was guaranteed. The indirect influence of Russia,—self-determining, self-supporting, self-sufficing—will be the way in which she will exert her mighty influence on mankind."

In the discussion which followed, some one ask Dr. Holmes why he had said that the only alternative to the Soviet was czarism, and his reply was that he meant the only alternative to the Russian mind. They have come out of the Middle Ages into Sovietism. They could not envisage a system like ours.

Mr. Leining asked about the Russian destruction of initiative, and Dr. Holmes replied that Prof. Harry F. Ward was now in Russia working on a book—"Initiative in the Soviets."

Dr. Cary asked him about crime and criminals, and Dr. Holmes described at some length the crimes against the state and against the individual, and the ruthless measures taken by the government to wipe them out.

Rev. Crawford Smith asked about religion. Dr. Holmes replied that the intelligent people do not think about religion. *It is dead.* As to the masses, the Czar symbolized religion and when they got rid of the Czar they got rid of religion.

*Christian Leader.*

## In Re, the Orthodox Church

According to *The Church Gazette* (Irish Protestant) Professor Bulgakov thus describes the place of the Virgin in the orthodox church.

> "The orthodox church venerates our Lady as the Mother of God; we glorify her not only as the Ever Virgin, but also as the Queen of Heaven and Seraphim and All Angels; the first of all humanity and of all creation. . . . According to the faith of the Orthodox Church, the assumption of our Lady was her complete glorification; she was not only raised from the dead by her son, but also taken into Heaven and sits on the right hand of her son. . . . In her there is already accomplished the fulness in the created world, and no further completion is possible. Therefore she is present at her son's right hand at the Last Judgment. She herself is not judged, but she implores His mercy for others. . . She is the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost. He personally abideth and reveals Himself in her. . . . And this fullest, perfect penetration becomes a revelation of the Holy Spirit in the person of the Holy Virgin. She, in her person and nature, in her whole existence, is completely penetrable to the Holy Ghost, and so is His personal revelation, just as the son is revealed in Jesus Christ. She is the bearer of the Holy Ghost and therefore the representation of the holiness of the Church, the Bride of Christ . . . as a spiritual center of humanity she is the mother of all mankind."

According to the above statement our readers will notice that the doctrine of the Trinity, which is so often represented symbolically, by a triangle, should properly be represented by a quadrangle; but in this case the quadrangle is a fourth dimensional rhomboid or some distorted figure in which one side is longer than any other. This fourth side represents the Virgin, as the above formula has it, who is not only the first of all humanity but of all creation. Also the Virgin contains more of the Holy Spirit than does the Son. In other words there is a complete pleroma, or, put in summary scholastic fashion, there needs to be a reversal of the formula which should now read *non sola tota in qualibet parte, sed tota in toto.*

As *The Church Gazette* pertinently remarks, "All this sounds strange teaching in the ears of a member of the Church of England. There is not a scrap of evidence for it in Holy Scripture, and there is nothing of it in the thirty-nine Articles or other formularies of our Church." To this we can subscribe "Amen".—*Chronicle.*

## Schweitzer: A Brother to the Man in Pain

Those who are now reading Dr. Schweitzer's new book, "The Forest Hospital at Lambarene," and who have not already read the story* of his work in Africa, "On the Edge of the Primeval Forest," will do well to turn to it for an explanation of much that the second book contains. Interesting as the new volume unquestionably is, it is not to be compared in inspiration or literary value with the first, for, in these experiences and observations so simply and beautifully set down, Dr. Schweitzer gives us his philosophy of life and his arguments for missionary service in a fashion that is both noble and unanswerable.

Why did this gifted theologian, philosopher, doctor of medicine, and distinguished musician abandon certain rewards from science and art in order to proceed to Equatorial Africa as a missionary doctor? Why did he risk his health and future to minister to ignorant men and women who sometimes were not even grateful for the service that he rendered? Why did he find it worth while, after four and a half years of arduous toil and with his work practically ruined by war conditions, to return to Europe and set about, almost single-handed, once more raising funds to go back to rebuild on firmer foundations the work to which he had pledged his heart? When so many question the wisdom of such a brilliant man "wasting" his unquestioned gifts, why does he feel such a call to minister to the needy "heathen?" Only a religion of love and brotherhood can explain such a life.

Dr. Schweitzer went to Africa because he believed that the parable of Dives and Lazarus had been spoken directly to the privileged peoples of the earth. He says: "We are Dives, for, through the advances of medical science, we now know a great deal about disease and pain, and have innumerable means of fighting them; yet we take as a matter of course the incalculable advantages which this new wealth gives us! Out there in the colonies, however, sits wretched Lazarus, the colored folk, who suffers from illness and pain just as much as we do, nay much more, and has absolutely no means of fighting them. And just as Dives sinned against the poor man at his gate because for want of thought he never put himself in his place and let his heart and conscience tell him what he ought to do, so do we sin against the poor man at our gate." And so this great man went to Lazarus, raising the necessary funds practically through his own efforts, because "it was, and is still, my conviction that the humanitarian work to be done in the world should, for its accomplishment, call upon us as men, not as members of any particular nation or religious body."

Believing that his mission is to help, he serves these needy people, helps them to rid themselves of their fears and superstitions so far as may be, never attempts to order their lives by some set pattern of morality and "goodness," and always remembers that they are children of whom too much can not be expected until they are more completely

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* "On the Edge of the Primeval Forest." By Albert Schweitzer. (A new edition.) Macmillan, $2.00.

set free. That unlimited love and patience is required is evident. He himself tells us that the life he lives is "a terribly unromantic business life for one who came out to preach the religion of Jesus," and "the Head could sometimes almost forget that he was a missionary at all! But it is just by means of the Christian sympathy and gentleness that he shows in this every day business that he exercises his greatest influence; whatever level of spirituality the community reaches is due to nothing so much as to the success of its Head in this matter of Preaching without Words."

Dr. Schweitzer is convinced that our civilization is burdened with a great debt. "We are not free to confer benefits on these men or not, as we please; it is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement." And so he pays this debt, not only for himself but for those who believe in his work and have helped to sustain it. And in order that the work may be continued and strengthened, he tells us that what he would most like is a Fellowship of those who bear the Mark of Pain—those who have known physical anguish, those who have watched the suffering of loved ones, and those who have seen deliverance from death itself. If all these will feel their obligation to pass on the benefits which they have received, if they will feel an obligation to assist in providing such helpers for those who now lack them, such a fellowship can work miracles. Commissioned by it, doctors can go forth "to carry out among the miserable in far-off lands all that ought to be done in the name of civilization, human and humane."

Does it pay? How can a doctor here and there cope adequately with the misery of the world? This doctor, who has seen for himself, answers unhesitatingly: "From my own experience and from that of all colonial doctors, I answer that a single doctor out here with most modest equipment means very much for very many. The good which he can accomplish surpasses a hundred-fold what he gives of his own life and the cost of the material which he must have. . . . We can in a single year free from the power of suffering and death hundreds of men who must otherwise have succumbed to their fate in despair. . . . Is not this really a call to us?"—*Christian Leader.*

# Book Review

*(When ordering books, please mention this Magazine.)*
NOTE—*Reviews, when not signed, are by the Editor.*

**St. Augustine.** A Study in his personal religion by *Eleanor McDougall,* Principal Women's Christian College, Madras. Student Christian Movement Press, London. 125 pages.

This is a book by one who admired and loved the greatest of all church fathers exceedingly. Of course, the author does not discuss Augustin's theology or his churchmanship. She just presents the man, but she thinks that as a devout Christian, a man who practiced the presence of God, he has few equals, and that his influence on his time and all time, has been wholly good.

Kershner, on the other hand (see B. R. page 234, May, 1931) in referring to Augustine's Confessions, speaks almost contemptuously of his slavish homage to the Ruler of the world. "He fairly grovels in the dust before the Almighty." He also, says Kershner, takes a strange delight in recounting the tortures of eternal damnation (see 17th book in the "City of God"). Kershner almost holds him responsible for the terrible cruelties of the Middle Ages, they were "only faint imitations on the part of human beings of the divine hell-fire of Augustine." "For a thousand years the shadow of Augustine was cast across the church."

Miss McDougall has brought historic sequence into the chapters of Augustine's "Confessions". From the so reconstructed record (and from his letters) she builds up a story of Augustine's conversion that in minuteness and impressiveness we have never seen surpassed. The long battle for the soul of the young man, who learned to love the name of Christ from his mother, long before he dedicated himself to him, is dramatically described. It was a long battle lasting until he was more than thirty-two years old. But after it was finished his consecration to the Lord was complete. His carnal lust, once so strong in his members, was entirely subdued. His love of praise stayed with him, as a constant danger, but also continually resisted and overcome.

After that memorable scene in the garden at Milan—where his conversion took place—he passed through severe trials. His mother died; the mother of his illegitimate son left him; his best friend passed away suddenly—to his loving soul a great blow—and Deodatus, his son, a boy of brilliant gifts, died at fifteen years of age. All the more undivided was his surrender to the Lord. He was a great letter-writer. Over three hundred are existent (every letter required a carrier, there being no postal service). He exerted a great influence over people in all kinds of stations and conditions through these letters. But soon he was prevailed upon to take orders, and a sudden election to the bishopric of Hippo (in North Africa) followed in 395. He

accepted it reluctantly since he would have preferred a life of prayer and meditation. He stayed in this obscure diocese until he died (430) during a siege of the city by the Vandals. His influence, however, was world-wide. It was felt no less by the Protestant Reformers than by their Catholic predecessors.

It is true that his habit of bursting into prayer, in his Confessions, at the least provocation is not so much to our taste. It is also true that as an interpreter of the Scriptures he makes an extravagant use of the allegorical method; as the author puts it, he expatiates more than he expounds. His lurid ideas about the condemned he shares with his and all Christian ages.

His devoutness, his ardent love of God and of mankind, his faculty of concentration, his depth of insight, his keenness of mind, his creative thought have placed him on a level with the very greatest of the race. His name will not perish, it will hardly lose in luster with the passing of the aeons.

The book describing the deep piety (Bhakta the writer loves to call it, using the Hindu term) of the man will stimulate a mood for prayer more than many a technical book of prayers.

**An Emerging Christian Faith** by *Justine Wroe Nixon*, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1930, 327 pages.

The author agrees with the many who believe that the Christian religion needs "a new house of faith." The Christian Church "once more must essay the task of developing a high philosophy of religion and life—a philosophy which in both its intellectual strength and its spiritual dignity will be comparable to that of the Alexandrian thinkers in the third century, of Augustine in the fifth, of Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth and of Calvin in the sixteenth." The Church as a whole needs a radical reconstruction of its system of thought.

The changes in world view since Calvin's time are so great that it is absolutely necessary for the Christian Church to adjust itself to the new intellectual environment. This new philosophy will, in the author's opinion, not come from a few great thinkers; it will be the task of many. If a sufficient number of people who have the religious faith and are open-minded towards new ideas, band themselves together they can give the movement a momentum felt by the whole church. And since it is to be a democratic affair, the practical interests of religion, what it does for the enrichment of life, will be the decisive criterion in the new orientation.

The author does not make the claim as though he were giving this new philosophy in the book before us. He has written the book largely to satisfy his own needs, in the hope that, since the needs of others may be very much like his own, he may also render a service to many contemporaries. In this intercourse, as parish minister, with young people, he has had to answer three questions in this connection. First, Why are we so confused in our religious thinking when our fathers were so sure? The second was the question of the validity and relevance of religion in our day. The third was, what might be the posi-

tive content of a modern Christian faith. These questions find their answer in the book.

Our fathers had the infallible Bible, the product of divine revelation. To us biblical criticism has revealed the human side of the Bible. We see in the Bible a gradual growth of moral and religious ideas. To the Liberal the Bible, though he values it as no other book, does not speak with absolute authority on all questions of belief and morals. He believes that the enlightened judgment of the individual Christian is the court of last resort. Again, the marvelous advance of science in our day, while it has conferred innumerable blessings, has also created serious problems. Evolution traces the history of man to an animal past. He rose to the human level in a development of countless centuries. His "sins" are the heritages of his beastly antecedents. The earth is not a divine creation. As the offspring of a larger body, its present shape and nature is the result of the operation of physical forces. A happy "accident" made it a suitable place for anthropoid apes and their descendants, human beings. Its diminutive size, compared with other bodies in the universe, seemed to belie the claims religion makes for earth-born man.

It is not necessary for us to discuss the elements in the modern world making for change in detail. The author sums them up by saying that it is the organic view of the world that is the chief new thing and with which the church must come to an understanding. This view looks upon the world and life as a whole. All the different parts are interrelated, man and nature, natural and spiritual, science and faith. Out of all the activities of the human mind we must form a synthesis. Every aspect and area of his world makes some contribution to his philosophy and to the kind of faith that is going to emerge out of the melting pot in which human thought now finds itself.

The present state of religion is not satisfactory. College youth, the writer says, do not think of God naturally. To the working world God is a symbol of the economic oppression its members are suffering from. Technology, not prayer, furnishes the key to the control of natural forces today. What function is left to deity to perform? It is to have the fate of the devil, who is now a "vagrant" (without visible means of support)? How can the evil in the world be reconciled with a loving God?

Nevertheless, religion has survived the contempt of the wise. It answers to our feeling of the mystery of life; it leads to great fulness of existence; supports us in the crises of life and acts as a cement holding together the individuals and groups of society. The belief is growing, even among the leaders of science, that faith has the backing of the universe; that the world at bottom is reasonable and just; that back of the natural process there is a purpose and a mind. God, in relation to us a person, in relation to the material world the order of nature, has still remained to us. Jesus Christ, thoroughly human and yet more than human, as the highest embodiment of love to God and love to man, can inspire us with a similar love by contact with his personality. That there is a life after death, while it cannot be demon-

strated, it is highly probable. The creed of the author (his: "we believe") is the conventional one of the Liberal: Faith in God the only durable basis on which life can come to its fulfilment.

In Jesus we have the highest revelation of God's character and source of spiritual energy

Life with God and men is possible on the basis of love.

To make the fruits of personal and group experience available for all, marks the line of advance for the Christian spirit.

The author's creed is not an adequate interpretation of the "second article." But in his study of relevant literature of his subject and in his stand over against the opponents of the Christian faith, he shows a surprisingly large acquaintance with contemporary thought and great independence of judgement. The book deserves careful attention and will be a helpful guide to the one who is groping after a way out of the confusion.

**Jesus Came Preaching.** Christian Preaching in the New Age by *Geo. A. Buttrick.* New York, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1931. 239 pages, $2.50.

There have been a great many "Yale Lectures on Preaching" since H. W. Beecher and Phillips Brooks had set the pace. These two have perhaps never been equaled in all the years that followed, but why should only those be heard to whom ten talents had been given? Nevertheless, it might seem as though in all those years nearly everything had been said that could be said.

Those who reason thus forget one important factor: all preaching must be *timely.* The preacher must adapt himself to his audience, he must be in touch with the spirit of the age. And since this spirit changes, the preacher's manner and method must change. This is the point the author of this book, containing the Yale Lectures on Preaching of last year, tries to make.

Is there still a place for the preacher, he asks, in this twentieth century of ours? Isn't science the light of this new age rather than faith? Or hasn't the press taken the place of the spoken word? Or isn't radio a more efficient method than the pulpit, There are discordant voices enough; still the race can't get along without the divine love to lean upon, and the son of God who convinced it of the reality of this love. And as he used the method of preaching to deliver himself of his message, so must his disciples be living witnesses of a divine influence that is as operative today as it was then.

But is Christ still the preacher's authority? "It is a faithful saying that apostolic preaching had but one word—Christ, from whom all other words derived their life. The night of pagan cults had a thousand stars; the day of the apostles' gospel had but one Sun. He was Alpha and Omega. There was no other name in earth or heaven. All their arguments were clinched and all their commands were sealed, in Him." "The first Christian preaching had for its cloud by day and its fire by night Christ—Him crucified and Him risen."

"But our age has scant respect for tradition. In music the masters

are ignored, their rhythms beaten into a tattoo, thin haunting sequences abducted and made drunk. In art likewise a new fashion prevails, whether good or bad few know, for few can comprehend. In morals the upheaval is so vast that it seems at times as though all the roads were gone, all the bridges down, all the floods let loose. In religion the revolt has swept beyond the outer earth works to the very citadel, so that now it is not a question of dogma but of the reality of God." Christ himself has not been saved from the acids of a critical analysis. Yet whatever may have been the results, his God-consciousness, his sublime character, his love for man, his wisdom, his teachings have stood the surest criticism of the ages. Even today, the world does not find fault with him but, rather, with the church for not following the words and example of its master. He is then, he ought to be even according to the world, the pattern and authority of the preacher.

The author goes on to show that in Christ the mind of today finds certitude as well as fortitude; that the social order needs for its readjustment the courage and devotion of Christian leadership. He has a chapter on the craftsmanship and the personality of the preacher. He closes with one on the cross. With great emphasis he here proclaims that, although the cross is absent from a great many sermons today, its central importance for preacher and preaching remains the same. Without offering a special or new view of the mystery of the atonement, he stresses that in it God's self-sacrificing love is supremely manifest; that no life comes to maturity without suffering; that the church may obscure the cross only at its peril.

With great earnestness the writer pursues his task. He has a very original and often very striking way of putting things. The ideal he sets the preacher for his preaching is high; it requires the highest efforts of mind and heart to realize. The perusal of the author's noble thought is an aid to the preacher as he tries to approximate the goal so elusive and yet so compelling.

**Giving the Men a Chance** by *William F. Weir*, D.D., LL.D., General Secretary of the Men's Work 1916-1931, Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Privately published, Chicago, Ill. 1931. 148 pages. $1.25.

There aren't many books like this in the market. In fact, people who know tell us that it is the only one of its kind. A great many books, of course, have been written on men and their relation to the church in general. This book, however, is a handbook showing how work for men and with men can actually be done in the local church. For while the church as a whole must work out a program and define objectives, this book points out how such a program can be channeled into the individual congregation. Dr. Weir has had a long experience in men's work; and since 1916 he has been the general secretary of the Men's Work in the Presbyterian Church. He has spoken on this cause at many places and before large and important gatherings. These addresses have been collected in this book.

For a long time it had been considered doubtful whether men could be interested enough in religious affairs to justify the organizing

of men's clubs or brotherhoods of a distinctively religious nature. Mr. Weir, because of an optimistic temperament perhaps, but more on account of successful work, does not hesitate a minute to claim that men can be enlisted in work for Christ, the Church at large, their denomination and their local congregation. He is by no means satisfied if the brotherhood is nothing more than a social club. It must be an organization based on religious fellowship, and it must engage in Christian work of a very practical and worthwhile character.

Of course, we all know something about these things from our connection with our own brotherhood work. But one who reads the book, at once gets the impression that he has to do with an expert along this line. Besides, there is nothing superficial or conventional about these addresses. The author writes a vigorous, manly and pleasing style. There are no obscurities in it and yet there is a wealth of thought ably and concisely expressed, so that the reading of the chapter is an enjoyable privilege rather than a duty.

There is in the book material enough for a good many addresses for men. More than that, it is a text book that will teach many a busy pastor how to make out of his brotherhood a real asset to the church and a useful agency for work than can only be done by the men of the congregation.

**The Recovery of Worship.** A Study of the Crucial Problem of the Protestant Churches by *Geo. W. Fiske*, Professor of Religious Education, The Graduate School of Theology, Oberlin College. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1931. 269 pages.

The crucial problem of the Protestant churches, thinks the author, is more vital and creative worship, yielding a deeper sense of God's presence and power. "Pulpit pyrotechnics, hypnotic revivals, music, operatic or syncopated, benevolent social programs, or highly intellectual sermons can never save the Church. Our efforts at socializing and humanizing religion have not been entirely futile, but they often miss the main point. More and more they are losing God. Unless the free churches develop a more convincing, more compelling and more satisfying worship, Protestantism is ultimately doomed."

What the author says, really has application more to the churches of the liberal type, but since he is more at home with that class he applies it to Protestantism as a whole. The preaching, he says, is mostly of the cold, intellectual kind. Its negations are more pronounced than its affirmations. There are no strong convictions and therefore there is no note of authority. The break between the church of today and that of the past is almost complete. There is hardly a creed of any kind that can be recited in the modern church. Even the apostolic creed cannot be uttered without quite a few mental reservations. The service bears too much the character of a subjective performance. There are those even who have been stranded in the shallows of humanism. The very fact of the reality of God has been abandoned.

And as the pulpit, so the pew. People don't come to church to worship God. They come to hear the preacher and to be entertained

by the choir. Their attitude is passive, not active. Their temporal condition is so full of comfort, the mastery of nature's powers by science and the technical arts is so complete that the need of a God is hardly felt. If they come to church at all it is by force of habit and to preserve respectability.

This is a gloomy picture, indeed, and it is no wonder, says the writer, that Newman's beautiful hymn ("Lead, kindly light") with its "encircling gloom" is so popular. The note of triumph is very rare in Protestant churches. What a contrast to the Catholic services! When the priest, in performing the miracle of the Mass, pronounces the magical words, "Hoc mea corpus est" (Who is responsible for the false gender? Rev.), a holy thrill pervades the worshipers and the whole assembly bows in reverence. They know—or they think they know—that Christ himself is present and they return to their daily task satisfied that they have been in touch with the head of the church.

How, then, is the Protestant church to save itself from virtual extinction? It must recover the lost art of worship. The services must be so conducted that it is possible for the people to realize in them the presence of God. They must be made to learn that the altar is the center of the service, not the pulpit. The writer then joins hands with those who have in these latter years stressed the necessity of a well arranged worship program. Without approving the sacramentarian tendencies of the Anglo-Catholics, he heartily commends a liturgy that uses the best elements of past and present models. The church itself ought to be so built that it is a sanctuary, not just a meeting place or a theater either. The church year ought to be re-established, in a more or less modern form. The Lord's Supper ought to be made the climax of the service of worship, but its note ought to be made one of triumph, relieving the somewhat funereal character it has at present, according to the author.

The Sunday school ought to be the training place of the young in the discovery of this worship ideal, although the writer does not conceal from himself the difficulties that are in the way of such a goal.

The churches have to be taught to be singing churches. This will require a thorough re-education of our people, but songs have ever been more powerful than sermons.

The author seems to favor written or printed prayers to the spontaneous and unprepared kind (the very opposite of the tendency noted in our Church where most of the younger clergy deem it beneath themselves to use the prayers of the Manual.) He offers a collection of prayers mostly used in college services. They were gotten up with meticulous care and are addressed to worshippers of all kinds and conditions. This kind of prayers doesn't appeal to reviewer, he thinks that such an enumeration of many different psychological cases would tire the hearer; but he may be mistaken.

The book as a whole is a noble contribution to an important cause. The writer has studied the subject in all its aspects. The volume is rich in striking illustrations and very pleasant to read. On every page

it bears witness to the fact that the writer is constantly drawing on the experience of many years.

In closing we want to record one point where we differ from the writer. Of course it is true that he claims he does not weaken the emphasis on the preaching function. Still he makes the assertion all the way through that the praying and singing part of the service makes the presence of God felt more than the preaching. Reviewer, on the other hand, while admitting the power of music, of beauty and silence, must contend for himself that real, spiritual preaching has helped him more than all the singing. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, says the apostle. On Pentecost it was the sermon that converted those thousands; the singing is not even mentioned. All these other things cooperate, but real execution is done in the pulpit. Should it be otherwise today?

**The Message of the American Pulpit** by *Lewis H. Chrisman*, A.M., Litt.D., Professor of English Literature, West Virginia Wesleyan College. Richard R. Smith, Inc. New York, 1930. 255 pages.

The purpose of this book is to give a clear understanding of the spirit and content of the message of the contemporary American pulpit. In endeavoring to render such a service, the author says, he is pushing the plow into virgin soil. We have on our shelves hundreds of collections of sermons, but have had hitherto no volume which summarizes what the modern pulpit has to say on important subjects.

The author, in preparing this book, has studied over six hundred sermons, most of them preached since 1920. He has arranged his summaries in thirteen chapters and we have no hesitation in saying that he has written a most interesting and informing volume on this theme. On the whole he takes an optimistic view of the intellectuality and spirituality of the American pulpit. He is detached enough to do justice to the messages of different types of theological schools, and at the same time, honest enough to point out limitations where such seem to occur.

The first chapter is on the Present-day Preacher's Interpretation of God. We don't today try anymore to prove the reality of God by syllogisms. We have come to admit that we can't convince a man of it by demonstration. The mind must be open to spiritual truth, one must be a seeker or God won't be found. Still the main difficulty does not lie in the intellectual field: the real enemy of theism is materialism. Modern science furnishes itself strong arguments for the reputation of a materialistic philosophy. Besides, the American pulpit has been successfully contending that belief in a higher being is one of the essential endowments of human nature. In preaching God we often stress the human characteristics of God at the expense of the transcendent ones and his love more than his justice. The teaching of God's immanence, so popular in our day, sometimes leads to the borders of humanism. One thing the writer seems to have overlooked in this connection, namely the recent contention about the personality of God. Scientists and theologians have been trying to give us a conception of

God that seems to overcome the limitations that the idea of personality carries into the divine being, especially the writings of Wieman, Sh. Mathews, Kirsopp Lake, and others. These modern substitutes have been found to be entirely inadequate. We fail to see any reference in the book to this important phase of the discussion.

The second chapter is entitled "Jesus in the pulpit of this Generation." Jesus is the highest revelation of God man has. That God is like Jesus is one of the main emphases of Christological preaching of the last decade. In interpreting Jesus our pulpit likes to bring out his virile qualities rather than those of the "meek and lowly." Sometimes this tendency has led the advocates of "muscular Christianity" to absurd lengths (Bruce Barton "The Man Nobody Knows"). Still, even where such derailments are avoided, it seems to be the tacit understanding that people would rather hear of Jesus as the one who leads to fulness of life than as the one who brings forgiveness of sin. The author, nevertheless, is of the opinion that the doctrine of atonement is still preached with due emphasis. Reviewer disagrees here with the writer. To him it seems that the atonement is the very thing that our pulpit is at sea about. Most preachers are hard put to it when they are to explain why Christ had to die in order to make available for us the divine forgiveness.

A very good chapter is the next, "the Preacher as Interpreter of his Age." Ours is the age of the machine. Our society is mechanized and a mechanized society becomes a materialized society. Man is regarded as the plaything of a mechanized process, not a living soul. It is an age of disillusionment. "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind" (Emerson). No mighty works can be done in an atmosphere of unbelief. We are for change, quick change, our feet are on the accelerator. The Japanese commit hari kari, the Americans commit hurry-scurry; both are suicidal. We must saturate civilization with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.

Our is not a heroic age. We look down on the Victorian Age as one of dulness and hypocrisy. Our own is one of revolt, but it remains to be seen whether we shall achieve better standards, whether we shall reconstruct society or disrupt it.

Other chapters are on the Church, on Sin, on Evolution, on Internationalism, on the Larger Hope (Immortality). The whole book is a mine of information on the important trends of the day. It is based on the extensive and intensive study of the subject. It is a most welcome aid to the student of the modern church. Numberless sermons could be produced from its material. It has our most complete and cordial recommendation.

**God in Christian Thought and Experience** by *W. R. Matthews*, Dean of King's College, London. Nisbet and Company, London, 1930. 283 pages.

The number of those who accept the affirmations of the Christian faith simply on the authority of the Bible or the church, is constantly diminishing. If the church and religion are to maintain themselves

it can only be done by a frank and courageous facing of the problems which science and modern thought raise before the man of today. Of these problems the nature and reality of God is the outstanding one. The fight is not any more about the outposts of Christianity but about the very citadel of its existence. The writer of this book has taken the bull by the horns. In a thoroughgoing, substantial and solid way he shows what the Christian faith in God means and why such faith can raise its head confidently in the midst of modern life and doubt. The faith of the Christian is not an assumption (as so many Christian apologists even are satisfied to grant), nor a philosophical speculation. It is based on spiritual experience, the experience of the Christian Church as well as of the individual Christian. The central position of this experience is its faith in God. In interpreting its nature the writer sets out from Schleiermacher's definition of religion as the "feeling of absolute dependence." In his opinion the essential correctness of this view may be conceded, but Schleiermacher seems to him to neglect the part reason and conscience play in the religious consciousness. His conception is too passive, dependence ought to be supplemented by cooperation. R. Otto's famous investigations (in his book "The idea of the Holy") comes to mind here. Religion is to Otto the feeling of the "Wholly Other." Yes, says our author, but at the same time the feeling of the other as continuous with our self, the feeling of the beyond which is also within; for if it was not also within, we could not notice or appreciate it.

The nature of religion is just as pregnant in meaning as it is native to man and universal. It has been explained as a search for unity. The fact of polytheism seems to oppose this view. But the human mind never rested with polytheism. Polytheism has always been an imperfect monotheism and has been overcome in and by the latter. The relation between religion and morality of some sort has always been close. Religion has been the guardian of the higher values. Kant went as far as postulating a God in order to guarantee the moral order. He seemed to think it was necessary to invent a God to get us to be good. Religion and morality, however, are not the same thing. Religion is fellowship with the divine, not only obedience to the moral law. Nor is a belief in high ideals a substitute for faith in God. There is a redemptive element in every kind of religion. The religious man finds himself impotent and wretched in his isolated selfhood.

If the belief in God and all it involves is nothing but a projection of the human mind and its aspirations and needs into the cosmic sphere, then every concept of science, every idea of the reason, every judgment of value will be of physical origin and therefore nothing but a worthless projection.

The conceptions we have of God are often said to be inadequate because they are naturally clothed in anthropomorphic dress. Over against this the writer makes the challenging statement that the Christian doctrine of God depends more on the legitimacy of the anthropomorphic approach than any other. It is obvious that Jesus' conception of God as the Father was preeminently of this kind.

Our idea of God results from two streams of religious and intellectual development. It is the completion of the Hebrew religious experience: God is the sustainer of the ethical values, he is the God of righteousness. And there is in our view the Greek contribution: God is the satisfaction of the intellectual thirst for unity and coherence. In Jesus the prophetic or Hebrew element predominates. There is nothing in him resembling philosophical argument, nor any trace that he conceived the necessity of finding rational grounds for his belief.

Historic Christianity is not the religion of Jesus but the religion which centers upon Jesus. So often in these latter years we have heard that was counts is not the religion about Jesus, but the religion of Jesus, his faith and his love. But the New Testament offers no basis for such a view. Of course, Jesus is our inspiration and we ought to follow in his footsteps. Still the New Testament gospel is that we are reconciled to God in Christ, that he is the Savior from sin and the source of new life to us. Only when in a state of grace through redemption, can we have the new nature that conforms to him in faith and love. The creative line of Christian development of thought is found in Paul and John. "The new experience of God in Christ is something quite different from a following of a human example however perfect: it is the participation in a personal life which continues and is divine."

All through the book the author remains true to the biblical teachings about the nature of God. God is to him the creative Personality on whom all things depend, not the idea of an Absolute in whom all things are. He knows as well as anybody the difficulties in ascribing to God the attribute of personality. But he never, for that reason, yields to the modern tendency to make of God an empty abstraction or a bloodless phantom ("that feature of the universe. . . ." Wieman). He sticks to the Christian heritage but he faces every objection and shows himself familiar with every trend of thought in this field.

Such difficult subjects as the Trinity, God the Creator of heaven and earth, the origin of evil, predestination, God and time, providence, etc., are all handled with candor, with insight and skill. The reader at all times has the feeling that he has to do with a mind of superior clarity and the widest information. The writer cannot solve all riddles. What he says about the Trinity didn't enlighten us much. But such has been our experience with other great thinkers, the trouble lies in the subject, not in the writer. The book is written in a style that will appeal to the general educated reader. Sometimes the material is of an abstract nature demanding considerable concentration. Any pastor who wants to be a theologian also, in reading this book will find that the author is one of the clearest thinkers and best equipped guides, in this field, he has met with in a long time.

**Creative Teaching**—Letters to a Church School Teacher by *John Wallace Suter, Jr.* The Macmillan Co. 159 pages.

For some time we have had the feeling that in our book reviews we had been neglecting the field of religious education. In discussing

books one is apt to follow too much one's own preferences or the prevailing trend in general. There has been of late a liberal output of books dealing with the conception of God in our modern thought, and with the wider field of the adjustment of theology to the demands of science and the social situation. The subject of religious education, however, has in the last years assumed such importance and the application of modern pedagogical principles to it is deemed so imperative that without a doubt the subject should find adequate consideration in these pages.

We begin with this book, not because it is just off the press—it is in fact several years old—but we just happened on it and found it a most challenging little volume. We will say, at the outset, that the demands the writer makes of the Sunday School teacher seem to us extreme. Furthermore, that we have never seen a Sunday school, much less had one, where the ideals of the book came even approximately near realization. The kind of classwork he pictures for us could only be done in schools where each class had its own room—and 80% of all schools cannot provide that. It could be attempted only by trained teachers and most of our teachers are not trained. Finally, only teachers of a high spirituality could exert the religious influence the writer expects of them; but how often do we find men or women of such a high spiritual type?

Nevertheless, although the ideal teacher is as rare as a white raven, one must concede to the author that it would be great if we had such teachers as he portrays and that ideals, although seldom realized, are useful for inspiration and aspiration.

The old idea of the Sunday school was that it was there to impart facts and ideas, to instruct and to exhort. The new idea is to lead the pupil to make spiritual experiences. The two chief experiences are that of worship (public and private) and that of neighborliness: in biblical language, love to God and love for the neighbor. The new Sunday school studies the child first and then looks for such teaching material that is adapted to the child of a certain age and has the tendency to help him to the right kind of worship and brotherly love. Religion is not a topic but a life. It cannot really be taught it must be lived. The teacher must live it before the pupil and the pupil must catch the inspiration to a Christian life from the teacher.

As was said before, the writer expects of the teacher the most extraordinary qualities and efforts. He must know and like every pupil, even the mischievous one. He must know his home life and atmosphere, be his spiritual parent. He must devote at least two hours every week to his preparation. By the way, the writer speaks of the teacher always in the feminine gender, he doesn't seem to imagine even that he could be a man just as well.

The practical, detailed hints as to how a teacher is to prepare for a particular lesson are very helpful and complete. The aim must always be to teach the child, not a book. The purpose of the teacher is to influence the life of the pupil, and since man is a bundle of habits she will do well to make as many attitudes and activities of the chil-

dren habitual as she possibly can. One learns to do by doing. Therefore, by teaching and example, urge and help the pupil to act out the implications of the Christian life. Of course, the Christian religion is not all doing. There is also knowledge, understanding; there is a place for memory work. But the character and its upbuilding takes first place. In this great and serious work of changing human lives we need the help of the divine spirit. The writer gives prayer a large room. Every chapter has a prayer, every Sunday school period should begin with prayer.

The writer labors earnestly at his task of making the teacher realize the holiness and importance of his teaching function. To a large extent it will depend on her whether the children get the impression that the Sunday school is a real school and not a makeshift only. It is a book written by a man of long and intense experience. It is full of wise counsel, it is a book which will act as a moral tonic on all those who want to do better work in Sunday school. We recommend it most unreservedly.

**Church Profit-Making** by *F. A. Agar.* Fleming H. Revell Co. Price $1.00.

Since this book has been selected as the *Stewardship Book* of our Synod for 1932 it should be read by every Evangelical.

The question as to how and from what source the modern Church shall secure the needed finances with which to operate, is always before the Church but in our present day it is more acute. It would be well therefore for modern church leaders to study and apply the methods advocated by the author and which he bases upon scripture, in order to maintain the Church's self-respect and really meet the demands made upon it.

The author gives a number of very concrete examples as to what profit-making by the church is and shows the harm being done by following these examples. He analyses the problem of church finances as not being a lack of money among the members, but a failure of the church to educate the people in right standards of giving. The legal and moral sides are also stressed. But the author does not only destroy the old method of money-making by the church. He replaces it with suggestions as to how to educate the membership of the church in proportionate giving. The book ought to be given the widest possible circulation among the leaders of our churches.

Rev. Streich informs us that this book will be strongly recommended to our men and women this year.

*L. H. Lammers.*